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ASTOR, LENOX AND
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THE

LIFE AND WORKS

OF

WILLIAM COWPER.

VOL. IV.

Bene't College, Cambridge.

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He graced a college, and was honoured, loved and wept."

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THE WORKS

OF

WILLIAM COWPER

HIS

LIFE AND LETTERS

BY WILLIAM HAYLEY ESQ.

NOW FIRST COMPLETED BY THE INTRODUCTION OF

COWPER'S PRIVATE CORRESPONDENCE.

EDITED BY

THE REV. T. S. GRIMSHAWE, A.M.

RECTOR OF BURTON, NORTHAMPTONSHIRE, AND VICAR OF BIDDENHAM, BEDFORDSHIRE, AUTHOR OF THE LIFE OF THE REV. LEIGH RICHMOND.

Letters, such as are written from wise men, are, of all the words of men, in my judgment the best. LORD BACON.

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THE

LIFE OF COWPER.

Part the Second—Continued.

FEW subjects have agitated this country more deeply than the important question of the abolition of the Slave Trade; if we except, what was its final and necessary consequence, the extinction of Slavery itself. The wrongs of injured Africa seemed at length to have come up in remembrance before God, and the days of mourning to be approaching to their end. The strife of politics and the passions of contending parties gave way to the great cause of humanity, and a Pitt and a Fox, supported by many of their respective adherents, here met on common and neutral ground. The walls of parliament re-echoed with the tones of an eloquence the most sublime and impassioned, because it is the generous emotions of the heart that invigorate the intellect, and give to it a persuasive and commanding power. In the mean time the mammon of unrighteousness was not inactive; commercial cupidity and self-interest raised up a severe and determined resistance, which protracted the final

settlement of this question for nearly twenty years. But its doom was sealed. The moral feeling of the country pronounced the solemn verdict of condemnation, long before the decision of Parliament confirmed that verdict by the authority and sanction of law. William Wilberforce, Esq., the great champion of this cause, who had pleaded its rights with an eloquence that had never been surpassed, and a perseverance and ardour that no opposition could subdue, lived to see the traffic in slaves declared illegal by a legislative enactment; his own country rescued from an injurious imputation; and himself distinguished by the honourable and nobly earned title of *The Liberator of Africa.**

We have already stated that Cowper was urged to contribute some popular ballads in behalf of this benevolent enterprise, and that he composed three, one of which has appeared at the close of the last volume. We now insert another production of the same kind, which we think possesses more pathos and spirit than the former.

THE NEGRO'S COMPLAINT.

Forced from home and all its pleasures,
Afric's coast I left forlorn;
To increase a stranger's treasures,
O'er the raging billows borne.
Men from England bought and sold me,
Paid my price in paltry gold;
But, though slave they have enroll'd me,
Minds are never to be sold.

* The slave trade was abolished in the year 1807; declared to be felony, in 1811; and to be piracy, in 1824.

Still in thought as free as ever,
What are England's rights, I ask,
Me from my delights to sever,
Me to torture, me to task?
Fleecy locks and black complexion
Cannot forfeit Nature's claim;
Skins may differ, but affection
Dwells in white and black the same.

Why did all-creating Nature
Make the plant for which we toil?
Sighs must fan it, tears must water,
Sweat of ours must dress the soil.
Think, ye masters iron-hearted,
Lolling at your jovial boards,
Think how many backs have smarted
For the sweets your cane affords.

Is there, as ye sometimes tell us,
Is there one who reigns on high?
Has he bid you buy and sell us,
Speaking from his throne, the sky?
Ask him, if your knotted scourges,
Matches, blood-extorting screws,
Are the means that duty urges,
Agents of his will to use?

Hark! he answers—wild tornadoes,
Strewing yonder sea with wrecks;
Wasting towns, plantations, meadows,
Are the voice with which he speaks.
He, foreseeing what vexations
Afric's sons should undergo,
Fix'd their tyrants' habitations
Where his whirlwinds answer—No.

By our blood in Afric wasted,
Ere our necks received the chain;
By the miseries that we tasted,
Crossing in your barks the main;

By our sufferings, since ye brought us
To the man-degrading mart;
All sustain'd by patience, taught us
Only by a broken heart:

Deem our nation brutes no longer,
Till some reason ye shall find
Worthier of regard, and stronger,
Than the colour of our kind.
Slaves of gold, whose sordid dealings
Tarnish all your boasted powers,
Prove that you have human feelings,
Ere you proudly question ours!

See *Poems.*

To the Christian and philosophic mind, which is accustomed to trace the origin and operation of principles that powerfully affect the moral dignity and happiness of nations, it is interesting to inquire what is the rise of that high moral feeling, that keen and indignant sense of wrong and oppression, which form so distinguishing a feature in the character of this country? Why, too, when the crime and guilt of slavery attached to France, to Portugal, to Spain, to Holland, and above all to America, not less justly than to ourselves, was Great Britain the first to lead the way in this noble career of humanity, and to sacrifice sordid interest to the claims of public duty?

This inquiry is by no means irrelevant, because the same question suggested itself to the mind of Cowper, and he thus answers it—

The cause, though worth the search, may yet elude
Conjecture and remark, however shrewd.
They take perhaps a well-directed aim,

Who seek it *in his climate and his frame.*
Liberal in all things else, yet Nature here
With stern severity deals out the year.
Winter invades the spring, and often pours
A chilling flood on summer's drooping flowers;
Unwelcome vapours quench autumnal beams,
Ungenial blasts attending curl the streams;
The peasants urge their harvest, ply the fork
With double toil, and shiver at their work;
Thus with a rigour, for his good designed,
She rears her favourite man of all mankind.
His form robust and of elastic tone,
Proportioned well, half muscle and half bone,
Supplies with warm activity and force
A mind well-lodged, and masculine of course.
Hence liberty, sweet liberty inspires,
*And keeps alive his fierce but noble fires.**

Table Talk.

* The following lines, from Goldsmith's "Traveller," have always been justly admired, and are so much in unison with the verses of Cowper, quoted above, that we feel persuaded we shall consult the taste of the reader by inserting them.

"Fired at the sound, my genius spreads her wing,
And flies where Britain courts the western spring;
Where lawns extend that scorn Arcadian pride,
And brighter streams than famed Hydaspes glide!
There all around the gentlest breezes stray,
There gentle music melts on every spray;
Creation's mildest charms are there combined,
Extremes are only in the master's mind.
Stern o'er each bosom reason holds her state,
With daring aims irregularly great.
Pride in their port, defiance in their eye;
I see the Lords of human kind pass by;
Intent on high designs, a thoughtful band,
By forms unfashioned, fresh from Nature's hand;

The foundation of this high national feeling must evidently be sought in the causes here specified. To these may be added the influence arising from the constitution of our government, the character of our institutions, and the freedom with which every subject undergoes the severe ordeal of public discussion.

May it always be so wisely directed, as never to incur the risk of becoming the foaming and heedless torrent; but rather resemble the majestic river, so beautifully described by the poet Denham:

> " Strong without rage, without o'erflowing full."
>
> *Cooper's Hill.*

It is due, however, to the venerable name of Granville Sharp, to record, more particularly, the zeal with which he called forth and fostered these feelings, and devoted his time, his talents, and his labours, in exposing the cruelty and injustice of this nefarious traffic. He brought it to the test of Scripture. He refuted those arguments which pretended to justify the practice, from the supposed authority of the Mosaic law, by proving that the servitude there mentioned was a limited service, and accompanied by the year of release * and jubilee. He cited passages from

> Fierce in their native hardiness of soul,
> True to imagined right, above control;
> While e'en the peasant boasts these rights to scan,
> And learns to venerate himself as man."

The celebrated Dr. Johnson once quoted these lines, with so much personal feeling and interest, that the tears are said to have started into his eyes.—See *Boswell's Life of Johnson.*

* " In the seventh year thou shalt let him go free from

that law, expressly prohibiting and condemning it. "*Thou shalt not oppress a stranger*, for ye know the heart of a *stranger*, seeing ye were *strangers* in the land of Egypt." Exod. xxiii. 9. "If a *stranger* sojourn with thee, in your land, ye shall not vex the stranger," &c. &c. "*Thou shalt love him as thyself.*" Lev. xix. 33. "Love ye therefore the *stranger*, for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt." Deut. x. 17—19. He showed at large that slavery was directly opposed to the genius and spirit of the Gospel, which connects all mankind in the bonds of fellowship and love. He adduced the beautiful and affecting remark of St. Paul, who, in his address to Philemon, when he beseeches him to take back his servant Onesimus, observes, and yet "*not now as a servant, but above a servant, a brother beloved, specially to me, but how much more unto thee, both in the flesh and in the Lord.*" Ver. 16.

After urging various other arguments, and insisting largely, in his "Law of Retribution," on the extent and enormity of the national sin, and its fearful consequences, he draws an affecting picture of the desolation of Africa, quoting the following words of his illustrious ancestor, Archbishop Sharp: "*That Africa*, which is not now more fruitful of monsters, than it was once of excellently wise and learned men; *that Africa*, which formerly afforded us our *Clemens*, our *Origen*, our *Tertullian*, our *Cyprian*, our *Augustine*, and many other extraordinary lights in the church of God; that *famous Africa*,

thee. And when thou sendest him out free from thee, thou shalt not let him go away empty." Deut. xv. 12, 13.

in whose soil *Christianity* did thrive so prodigiously, and which could boast of so many flourishing churches, alas! *is now a wilderness.* 'The wild boar out of the wood doth waste it, and the wild beast of the field doth devour it,' 'and it bringeth forth nothing but bryars and thorns.' "

Such were the appeals of Granville Sharp to the generation that is now swept away by the rapid current of time. The grave has entombed their prejudices. The great judgment day will pronounce the final verdict. It is a melancholy proof of the slow progress of truth, and of the influence of prejudice and error, that De Las Casas pleaded the injustice of slavery, before the Emperor Charles V. nearly three hundred years from the present time; and that it required this long and protracted period, before the cause of humanity finally triumphed; and even then, the triumph was restricted to the precincts of one single kingdom. That kingdom is Great Britain! Five millions are said to be still reserved in bondage and oppression.* May this foul stain be speedily effaced; and civilized nations learn that they can never found a title to true greatness, till the rights of humanity and justice are publicly recognised and respected!

We could have dwelt with delight on the zeal of Ramsey and Clarkson, but our limits do not allow

* It is computed that there are two millions of slaves, belonging to the United States of America; a similar number in the Brazils; and that the remainder are under the control of other governments.

further digression, and the name of Cowper demands and merits our attention.

How much the cause is indebted to his zeal and benevolence, may be collected from the following extracts.

> Canst thou, and honoured with a Christian name,
> Buy what is woman-born, and feel no shame;
> Trade in the blood of innocence, and plead
> Expedience as a warrant for the deed?
> So may the wolf, whom famine has made bold
> To quit the forest and invade the fold:
> So may the ruffian, who with ghostly glide,
> Dagger in hand, steals close to your bedside;
> Not he, but his emergence forced the door,
> He found it inconvenient to be poor.
>
> *Charity.*

The verses, which we next insert, unite the inspiration of poetry with the manly feelings of the Englishman, and the ardour of genuine humanity.

> I would not have a Slave to till my ground,
> To carry me, to fan me while I sleep,
> And tremble when I wake, for all the wealth
> That sinews bought and sold have ever earn'd.
> No: dear as freedom is, and in my heart's
> Just estimation prized above all price,
> I had much rather be myself the slave,
> And wear the bonds, than fasten them on him.
> We have no slaves at home.—Then why abroad?
> And they themselves, once ferried o'er the wave
> That parts us, are emancipate and loos'd.
> Slaves cannot breathe in England: if their lungs
> Receive our air, that moment they are free;

They touch our country, and their shackles fall.*
That's noble, and bespeaks a nation proud
And jealous of the blessing. Spread it then,
And let it circulate through every vein
Of all your empire; that, where Britain's pow'r
Is felt, mankind may feel her mercy too."

The Task—The Time-piece.

But, highly as we appreciate the manly spirit of the Englishman, and the ardour of the philanthropist, in the foregoing verses, it is the *Missionary Feeling*, glowing in the following passage, that we most ad-

* The force and beauty of this passage will be best understood by the following statement. A slave, of the name of Somerset, was brought over to England from the West Indies, by his master, Mr. Stewart. Shortly after, he absented himself, and refused to return. He was pursued and arrested, and by Mr. Stewart's orders put on board by force, a ship, the captain of which was called Knowles. He was there detained in custody, to be carried out of the kingdom and sold. The case being made known was brought before Lord Chief Justice Mansfield, in the Court of King's Bench, June 22, 1772. The judgment of Lord Mansfield, on this occasion, was as follows:—"A foreigner cannot be imprisoned *here*, on the authority of any law existing in his own country. The power of a master over his servant is different in all countries, more or less limited or extensive; the exercise of it therefore must always be regulated by the laws of the place where exercised. The power claimed by this return was never in use *here*. No master ever was allowed *here* to take a slave by force, to be sold abroad, because he had deserted from his service, or for any other reason whatever. We cannot say the cause set forth by this return is allowed or approved of *by the laws of this kingdom, and therefore the man must be discharged.*" "*In other words,*" says a report of the case, "*a negro slave, coming from the colonies into Great Britain, becomes ipso facto Free.*"

mire, as expressing the only true mode of requiting injured Africa. Let us not think that we have discharged the debt by an act of emancipation.* In conferring the boon of liberty, we restore only that, of which they ought never to have been deprived. Restitution is not compensation. We have granted

* With what feelings of deep gratitude ought we to record the final emancipation of eight hundred thousand Negroes, in the West India Colonies, by an act which passed the British legislature, in the year 1834, dating the commencement of that memorable event from August the 1st. The sum of twenty millions was voted to the proprietors of slaves, as a compensation for any loss they might incur. Mr. Wilberforce was at this time on his dying bed, as if his life had been protracted to witness this noble consummation of all his labours. When he heard of this splendid act of national generosity, he lifted up his feeble hands to heaven, exclaiming, "*Thank God, that I have lived to see my country give twenty millions to abolish slavery.*"

The noble grant of the British and Foreign Bible Society (to commemorate this great event) of a copy of a New Testament and Psalter to every emancipated negro that was able to read, deserves to be recorded on this occasion. The measure originated in a suggestion of the Rev. Hugh Stowell. It was computed that, out of a population of eight hundred thousand negroes, one hundred and fifty thousand were capable of reading, and that an expenditure of twenty thousand pounds would be necessary to supply this demand. *Forty tons cubic measure of New Testaments were destined to Jamaica alone.* The Colonial Department was willing to assist in the transfer, but the Government packets were found to be too small for this purpose. It is greatly to the honour of some ship-owners, distinguished for their benevolence and public spirit, in the city of London, that they offered to convey this valuable deposit, free of freightage and expense, to its place of destination. The sum of fifteen thousand pounds was eventually contributed.

compensation to the proprietor, but where is the compensation to the negro? Never will the accumulated wrongs of ages be redressed, till we say to the sable sons of Africa, *Behold your God.* We have burst the chains from the body, let us now convey to them the tidings of a nobler freedom, a deliverance from a worse captivity than even African bondage and oppression. Let us announce to them that God "hath made of one blood all nations of men, that dwell on the face of the earth." Acts xvii. 26. Let their minds be expanded by instruction, and the Bible, that great charter of salvation, be circulated wherever it can be read, that thus Britain may acquire a lasting and an honourable title to their gratitude and love.

Inform his mind; one flash of heavenly day
Would heal his heart, and melt his chains away.
"Beauty for ashes" is a gift indeed,
And slaves, by truth enlarged, are doubly freed.
Then would he say, submissive at thy feet,
While gratitude and love made service sweet,
"My dear deliverer out of hopeless night,
Whose bounty bought me but to give me light,
I was a bondman on my native plain,
Sin forged, and ignorance made fast, the chain;
Thy lips have shed instruction as the dew,
Taught me what path to shun, and what pursue;
Farewell my former joys! I sigh no more
For Africa's once loved, benighted shore;
Serving a benefactor, I am free,
At my best home, if not exiled from thee."

Charity.

That Ethiopia shall one day stretch out her hands

unto God we have the assurance of a specific prophecy, as well as the general declarations of sacred scripture. "*All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the Lord, and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee.*" At what time or in what manner the prophecy will be accomplished it is not for us to determine. But should it please Divine Providence that the light of the gospel, through the instrumentality of Britain, should first spring forth from among that people in our own West India colonies, the land of their former servitude and oppression; should they subsequently, with bowels yearning for their own country, see fit to return, seized with a desire to communicate to the land of their nativity that gospel, the power of which they have previously felt for themselves; and should the hitherto inaccessible and unexplored parts of that vast continent thus become evangelised, such an event will furnish one of the most remarkable instances of an over-ruling Power, educing good out of positive evil, ever recorded in the annals of mankind.

We beg to add one more remark. The Blacks are considered to be the descendants of Ham, who first peopled Africa. It pleased God to pronounce an awful curse on him and his posterity. "Cursed be Canaan, a servant of servants shall he be." For the long period of four thousand years has that curse impended over their heads. They have drunk the cup of bitterness to its lowest dregs. We conceive this terrible interdict to be now approaching to its termination. The curse began to be repealed, *in*

part, when the abolition of slavery was first proclaimed by a British parliament. This was the seed time of the future harvest: the example of Britain cannot be exhibited in vain: other nations must follow that example, or suffer the consequences of their neglect. They must concede the liberty which is the great inherent right of all mankind, or expect to behold it wrested from them amidst scenes of carnage and blood. Policy, justice, and humanity, therefore, require the concession. We have said that the repeal of the curse had begun in part: it will be completed when civil privileges shall be considered to be only the precursors of that more glorious liberty flowing from the communication of the gospel of peace. Then will Africa be raised up from her state of moral degradation, and be elevated to the rank and order of civilized nations. Then will she once more boast of her Cyprians, her Tertullians, and her Augustines; and the voice of the Lord, speaking from his high and holy place, will proclaim to those "*who in time past were not a people, but are become the people of God; which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy:*" "*There is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bond, nor free: but Christ is all, and in all.*" Col. iii. 11.

How sweetly does the muse of Cowper proclaim the blessings of this spiritual liberty!

> But there is yet a liberty, unsung
> By poets, and by senators unprais'd,
> Which monarchs cannot grant, nor all the pow'rs
> Of earth and hell confed'rate take away:

A liberty which persecution, fraud,
Oppression, prisons, have no power to bind;
Which whoso tastes can be enslav'd no more.
'Tis liberty of heart, deriv'd from heav'n,
Bought with His blood, who gave it to mankind,
And seal'd with the same token. It is held
By charter, and that charter sanction'd sure
By th' unimpeachable and awful oath
And promise of a God. His other gifts
All bear the royal stamp, that speaks them his,
They are august; but this transcends them all.

He is the freeman whom the truth makes free,
And all are slaves beside. There's not a chain
That hellish foes, confed'rate for his harm,
Can wind around him, but he casts it off
With as much ease as Samson his green withes.
He looks abroad into the varied field
Of nature, and, though poor perhaps, compar'd
With those whose mansions glitter in his sight,
Calls the delightful scen'ry all his own.
His are the mountains, and the valleys his,
And the resplendent rivers. His t' enjoy
With a propriety that none can feel
But who, with filial confidence inspir'd,
Can lift to heav'n an unpresumptuous eye,
And smiling say—"My Father made them all!"

Winter Morning Walk.

The interesting nature of the subject and its popularity at the present moment must plead our excuse for these lengthened remarks and extracts. But we were anxious to prove how much this great cause of humanity was indebted, in the earlier stages of its progress, to the powerful appeals and representations of Cowper.

We now resume the Correspondence.

TO MRS. HILL.*

Weston Lodge, March 17, 1788.

My dear Madam—A thousand thanks to you for your obliging and most acceptable present, which I received safe this evening. Had you known my occasions, you could not possibly have timed it more exactly. The Throckmorton family, who live in our neighbourhood, and who sometimes take a dinner with us, were, by engagement made with them two or three days ago, appointed to dine with us just at the time when your turkey will be in perfection. A turkey from Wargrave, the residence of my friend, and a turkey, as I conclude, of your breeding, stands a fair chance, in my account, to excel all other turkeys; and the ham, its companion, will be no less welcome.

I shall be happy to hear that my friend Joseph has recovered entirely from his late indisposition, which I was informed was gout; a distemper which, however painful in itself, brings at least some comfort with it, both for the patient and those who love him, the hope of length of days, and an exemption from numerous other evils. I wish him just so much of it as may serve for a confirmation of this hope, and not one twinge more.

Your husband, my dear madam, told me, some time since, that a certain library of mine, concerning which I have heard no other tidings these five-

* Private Correspondence.

and twenty years, is still in being.† Hue and cry have been made after it in Old Palace Yard, but hitherto in vain. If he can inform a bookless student in what region, or in what nook, his long-lost volumes may be found, he will render me an important service.

I am likely to be furnished soon with shelves, which my cousin of New Norfolk-street is about to send me; but furniture for these shelves I shall not presently procure, unless by recovering my stray authors. I am not young enough to think of making a new collection, and shall probably possess myself of few books hereafter but such as I may put forth myself, which cost me nothing but what I can better spare than money—time and consideration.

I beg, my dear madam, that you will give my love to my friend, and believe me, with the warmest sense of his and your kindness,

Your most obliged and affectionate

W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.*

Weston Lodge, March 17, 1788.

My dear Friend—The evening is almost worn away while I have been writing a letter, to which I was obliged to give immediate attention. An application from a lady, and backed by you, could not

† Cowper's books had been lost, owing to his original illness, and his sudden removal to St. Alban's.

* Private Correspondence.

be less than irresistible. That lady, too, a daughter of Mr. Thornton's.* Neither are these words of course: since I returned to Homer in good earnest, I turn out of my way for no consideration that I can possibly put aside.

With modern tunes I am unacquainted, and have therefore accommodated my verse to an old one; not so old, however, but that there will be songsters found old enough to remember it. The song is an admirable one for which it was made, and, though political, nearly, if not quite, as serious as mine. On such a subject as I had before me, it seems impossible not to be serious. I shall be happy if it meet with your and Lady Balgonie's approbation.

Of Mr. Bean I could say much; but have only time at present to say that I esteem and love him. On some future occasion I shall speak of him more at large.

We rejoice that Mrs. Newton is better, and wish nothing more than her complete recovery. Dr. Ford is to be pitied.† His wife, I suppose, is going to heaven; a journey which she can better afford to take than he to part with her.

I am, my dear friend, with our united love to you all three, most truly yours,

W. C.

* Lady Balgonie.

† Dr. Ford was Vicar of Melton Mowbray, well known and respected, and a particular friend of Mr. Newton's.

TO THE REV. WALTER BAGOT.

March 19, 1788.

My dear Friend—The spring is come, but not I suppose that spring which our poets have celebrated. So I judge at least by the extreme severity of the season, sunless skies and freezing blasts, surpassing all that we experienced in the depth of winter. How do you dispose of yourself in this howling month of March? As for me, I walk daily, be the weather what it may, take bark, and write verses. By the aid of such means as these I combat the north-east wind with some measure of success, and look forward, with the hope of enjoying it, to the warmth of summer.

Have you seen a little volume, lately published, entitled, "The Manners of the Great?" It is said to have been written by Mr. Wilberforce, but whether actually written by him or not, is undoubtedly the work of some man intimately acquainted with the subject, a gentleman, and a man of letters.* If it makes the impression on those to whom it is addressed, that may be in some degree expected from his arguments, and from his manner of pressing them, it will be well. But you and I have lived long enough in the world to know that the hope of a general reformation in any class of men whatever, or of women either, may easily be too sanguine.

I have now given the last revisal to as much of

* The author of this work proved to be Miss Hannah More.

my translation as was ready for it, and do not know that I shall bestow another single stroke of my pen on that part of it before I send it to the press. My business at present is with the sixteenth book, in which I have made some progress, but have not yet actually sent forth Patroclus to the battle. My first translation lies always before me; line by line I examine it as I proceed, and line by line reject it. I do not, however, hold myself altogether indebted to my critics for the better judgment that I seem to exercise in this matter now than in the first instance. By long study of him, I am in fact become much more familiar with Homer than at any time heretofore, and have possessed myself of such a taste of his manner, as is not to be attained by mere cursory reading for amusement. But, alas! tis after all a mortifying consideration that the majority of my judges hereafter, will be no judges of this. *Græcum est, non potest legi*, is a motto that would suit nine in ten of those who will give themselves airs about it, and pretend to like or to dislike. No matter. I know I shall please *you*, because I know *what* pleases you, and am sure that I have done it.

Adieu! my good friend,

Ever affectionately yours,

W. C.

Cowper alludes in the following letters to the progress of his version, and the obstructions to the negro cause.

TO SAMUEL ROSE, ESQ.

Weston, March 29, 1788.

My dear Friend—I rejoice that you have so successfully performed so long a journey without the aid of hoofs or wheels. I do not know that a journey on foot exposes a man to more disasters than a carriage or a horse; perhaps it may be the safer way of travelling, but the novelty of it impressed me with some anxiety on your account.

It seems almost incredible to myself that my company should be at all desirable to you, or to any man. I know so little of the world as it goes at present, and labour generally under such a depression of spirits, especially at those times when I could wish to be most cheerful, that my own share in every conversation appears to me to be the most insipid thing imaginable. But you say you found it otherwise, and I will not for my own sake doubt your sincerity: *de gustibus non est disputandum*, and since such is yours, I shall leave you in quiet possession of it, wishing indeed both its continuance and increase. I shall not find a properer place in which to say, accept of Mrs. Unwin's acknowledgements, as well as mine, for the kindness of your expressions on this subject, and be assured of an undissembling welcome at all times, when it shall suit you to give us your company at Weston. As to her, she is one of the sincerest of the human race, and if she receives you with the appearance of pleasure, it is because she feels it. Her behaviour on such occasions is with her an affair of conscience, and she dares no more look a falsehood than utter one.

It is almost time to tell you, that I have received the books safe; they have not suffered the least detriment by the way, and I am much obliged to you for them. If my translation should be a little delayed in consequence of this favour of yours, you must take the blame on yourself. It is impossible not to read the notes of a commentator so learned, so judicious, and of so fine a taste as Dr. Clarke,* having him at one's elbow. Though he has been but few hours under my roof, I have already peeped at him, and find that he will be *instar omnium* to me. They are such notes exactly as I wanted. A translator of Homer should ever have somebody at hand to say, "that's a beauty," lest he should slumber where his author does not, not only depreciating, by such inadvertency, the work of his original, but depriving perhaps his own of an embellishment, which wanted only to be noticed.

If you hear ballads sung in the streets on the hardships of the negroes in the islands they are probably mine.† It must be an honour to any man to have given a stroke to that chain, however feeble. I fear however that the attempt will fail. The tidings which have lately reached me from London concerning it are not the most encouraging. While the matter slept, or was but slightly adverted to, the English only had their share of shame in common with other nations on account of it. But, since it has

* Dr. Samuel Clarke. His version is not now in much estimation, though his notes are useful in the interpretation of the text of his author.

† They were, after all, never appropriated to that purpose.

been canvassed and searched to the bottom, since the public attention has been rivetted to the horrible scheme, we can no longer plead either that we did not know it, or did not think of it. Woe be to us if we refuse the poor captives the redress to which they have so clear a right, and prove ourselves in the sight of God and men, indifferent to all considerations but those of gain! *

Adieu,

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

The Lodge, March 31, 1788.

My dearest Cousin—Mrs. Throckmorton has promised to write to me. I beg that, as often as you shall see her, you will give her a smart pinch, and say, "Have you written to my Cousin?" I build all my hopes of her performance on this expedient, and for so doing these my letters, not patent, shall be your sufficient warrant. You are thus to give her the question till she shall answer, "Yes." I have written one more song, and sent it. It is called the "Morning Dream," and may be sung to the tune of Tweed-Side, or any other tune that will suit it, for I am not nice on that subject. I would have copied it for you, had I not almost filled my sheet without

* The interests of commerce were too much at variance with this great cause of humanity not to oppose a long and persevering resistance to its progress in parliament. Though Mr. Pitt supported the measure, it was not made a government question.

it; but now, my dear, you must stay till the sweet sirens of London shall bring it to you, or, if that happy day should never arrive, I hereby acknowledge myself your debtor to that amount. I shall now probably cease to sing of tortured negroes, a theme which never pleased me, but which, in the hope of doing them some little service, I was not unwilling to handle.

If any thing could have raised Miss More to a higher place in my opinion than she possessed before, it could only be your information that, after all, she, and not Mr. Wilberforce, is author of that volume. How comes it to pass, that she, being a woman, writes with a force and energy, and a correctness hitherto arrogated by the men, and not very frequently displayed even by the men themselves?

Adieu,

W. C.

The object of this valuable treatise is not to attack gross delinquencies, but to show the danger of resting for acceptance on mere outward decorum and general respectability of character, while the internal principle, which can alone elevate the affections of the heart and influence the life, is wanting. We select the following passage as powerfully illustrating this view. Speaking of the rich man, who is represented by our Lord as lifting up his eyes in torments, Mrs. More observes, "He committed no enormities, that have been transmitted to us; for that he dined well and dressed well could hardly incur the bitter penalty of eternal misery. That his expenses were

suitable to his station, and his splendour proportioned to his opulence, does not exhibit any objection to his character. Nor are we told that he refused the crumbs which Lazarus solicited: and yet this man, on an authority we are not permitted to question, is represented in a future state as *lifting up his eyes, being in torments.* His punishment seems to have been the consequence of an irreligious, a worldly spirit; a heart corrupted by the softnesses and delights of life. It was not because he was rich, but *because he trusted in riches;* or, if even he was charitable, *his charity wanted that principle which alone could sanctify it. His views terminated here; this world's good, and this world's applause, were the motives and the end of his actions. He forgot God; he was destitute of piety; and the absence of this great and first principle of human actions rendered his shining deeds, however they might be admired among men, of no value in the sight of God.*"

Admonitory statements like these are invaluable, and demand the earnest attention of those to whom they apply.

Nor is the next passage less important on the subject of sins of omission.

"It is not less against *negative* than against *actual evil* that affectionate exhortation, lively remonstrance, and pointed parable, are exhausted. It is against the tree which bore *no* fruit, the lamp which had *no* oil, the unprofitable servant who made *no* use of his talent, that the severe sentence is denounced, as well as against *corrupt* fruit, *bad* oil, and talents *ill* employed. *We are led to believe,*

from the same high authority, that omitted duties and neglected opportunities will furnish no inconsiderable portion of our future condemnation. A very awful part of the decision, in the great day of account, seems to be reserved merely for carelessness, omissions, and negatives. Ye gave me *no* meat, ye gave me *no* drink; ye took me *not* in, ye visited me *not*. On the punishment attending positive crimes, as being more naturally obvious, it was not, perhaps, thought so necessary to insist." †

This work was the first important appeal in those days, addressed to the fashionable world, and Miss More's previous intercourse with it admirably qualified her to write with judgment and effect.

TO MRS. KING.*

Weston Lodge, April 11, 1788.

Dear Madam—The melancholy that I have mentioned, and concerning which you are so kind as to inquire, is of a kind, so far as I know, peculiar to myself. It does not at all affect the operations of my mind on any subject to which I can attach it, whether serious or ludicrous, or whatsoever it may be; for which reason I am almost always employed either in reading or writing when I am not engaged in conversation. A vacant hour is my abhorrence, because when I am not occupied I suffer under the

† Thoughts on the Manners of the Great.

* Private Correspondence.

whole influence of my unhappy temperament. I thank you for your recommendation of a medicine from which you have received benefit yourself; but there is hardly any thing that I have not proved, however beneficial it may have been found by others, in my own case utterly useless. I have, therefore, long since bid adieu to all hope from human means, —the means excepted of perpetual employment.

I will not say that we shall never meet, because it is not for a creature who knows not what shall be to-morrow to assert any thing positively concerning the future. Things more unlikely I have yet seen brought to pass, and things which, if I had expressed myself of them at all, I should have said were impossible. But, being respectively circumstanced as we are, there seems no present probability of it. You speak of insuperable hindrances; and I also have hindrances that would be equally difficult to surmount. One is, that I never ride, that I am not able to perform a journey on foot, and that chaises do not roll within the sphere of that economy which my circumstances oblige me to observe. If this were not of itself sufficient to excuse me, when I decline so obliging an invitation as yours, I could mention yet other obstacles. But to what end? One impracticability makes as effectual a barrier as a thousand. It will be otherwise in other worlds. Either we shall not bear about us a body, or it will be more easily transportable than this. In the mean time, by the help of the post, strangers to each other may cease to be such, as you and I have already begun to experience.

It is indeed, madam, as you say, a foolish world, and likely to continue such till the Great Teacher shall himself vouchsafe to make it wiser. I am persuaded that time alone will never mend it. But there is doubtless a day appointed when there shall be a more general manifestation of the beauty of holiness than mankind have ever yet beheld. When that period shall arrive there will be an end of profane representations, whether of heaven or hell, on the stage:—the great realities will supersede them.

I have just discovered that I have written to you on paper so transparent, that it will hardly keep the contents a secret. Excuse the mistake, and believe me, dear madam, with my respects to Mr. King,

Affectionately yours,

W. C.

The slow progress of the abolition cause, and the nature of the difficulties are adverted to in the following letter.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.*

Weston, April 19, 1788.

My dear Friend—I thank you for your last and for the verses in particular therein contained, in which there is not only rhyme but reason. And yet I fear that neither you nor I, with all our reasoning and rhyming, shall effect much good in this matter.

* Private Correspondence.

So far as I can learn, and I have had intelligence from a quarter within the reach of such as is respectable, our governors are not animated altogether with such heroic ardour as the occasion might inspire. They consult frequently indeed in the cabinet about it, but the frequency of their consultations in a case so plain as this would be, did not what Shakspeare calls commodity, and what we call political expediency, cast a cloud over it, rather bespeaks a desire to save appearances than to interpose to purpose. Laws will, I suppose, be enacted for the more humane treatment of the negroes; but who shall see to the execution of them? The planters will not, and the negroes cannot. In fact, we know that laws of this tendency have not been wanting, enacted even amongst themselves, but there has been always a want of prosecutors, or righteous judges; deficiencies which will not be very easily supplied. The newspapers have lately told us that these merciful masters have, on this occasion, been occupied in passing ordinances, by which the lives and limbs of their slaves are to be secured from wanton cruelty hereafter. But who does not immediately detect the artifice, or can give them a moment's credit for any thing more than a design, by this show of lenity, to avert the storm which they think hangs over them? On the whole, I fear there is reason to wish, for the honour of England, that the nuisance had never been troubled, lest we eventually make ourselves justly chargeable with the whole offence by not removing it. The enormity cannot be palliated; we can no longer plead that we

were not aware of it, or that our attention was otherwise engaged, and shall be inexcusable therefore ourselves ir we leave the least part of it unredressed. Such arguments as Pharaoh might have used to justify the destruction of the Israelites, substituting only sugar for bricks, may lie ready for our use also; but I think we can find no better.

We are tolerably well, and shall rejoice to hear that, as the year rises, Mrs. Newton's health keeps pace with it. Believe me, my dear friend,

Affectionately and truly yours,

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

The Lodge, May 6, 1788.

My dearest Cousin—You ask me how I like Smollett's Don Quixote? I answer, Well; perhaps better than any body's: but, having no skill in the original, some diffidence becomes me: that is to say, I do not know whether I *ought* to prefer it or not. Yet there is so little deviation from other versions which I have seen that I do not much hesitate. It has made me laugh I know immoderately, and in such a case *ç'a suffit.*

A thousand thanks, my dear, for the new convenience in the way of stowage which you are so kind as to intend me. There is nothing in which I am so deficient as repositories for letters, papers, and litter of all sorts. Your last present has helped me somewhat, but not with respect to such things as require

lock and key, which are numerous. A box, therefore, so secured, will be to me an invaluable acquisition. And, since you leave me to my option, what shall be the size thereof, I of course prefer a folio. On the back of the book-seeming box, some artist expert in those matters, may inscribe these words,

Collectanea curiosa,

the English of which is, a collection of curiosities. A title which I prefer to all others, because if I live, I shall take care that the box shall merit it, and because it will operate as an incentive to open that which being locked cannot be opened: for in these cases the greater the baulk the more wit is discovered by the ingenious contriver of it, viz. myself.

The General, I understand by his last letter, is in town. In my last to him I told him news, possibly it will give you pleasure, and ought for that reason to be made known to you as soon as possible. My friend Rowley, who I told you has, after twenty-five years' silence, renewed his correspondence with me, and who now lives in Ireland, where he has many and considerable connexions, has sent to me for thirty subscription papers.* Rowley is one of the most benevolent and friendly creatures in the world, and will, I dare say, do all in his power to serve me.

I am just recovered from a violent cold, attended by a cough, which split my head while it lasted. I escaped these tortures all the winter, but whose

* For his version of Homer.

constitution, or what skin, can possibly be proo against our vernal breezes in England? Mine neve were, nor will be.

When people are intimate, we say they are a great as two inkle-weavers, on which expression have to remark in the first place, that the word *grea* is here used in a sense which the corresponding tern has not, so far as I know, in any other language and secondly, that inkle-weavers contract intimacie with each other sooner than other people on accoun of their juxtaposition in weaving of inkle. Hence i is that Mr. Gregson and I emulate those happ weavers in the closeness of our connexion.* W live near to each other, and while the Hall is empt are each other's only extraforaneous comfort.

Most truly thine,

W. C.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

Weston, May 8, 1788.

Alas! my library—I must now give it up for lost thing for ever. The only consolation belongin to the circumstance is, or seems to be, that no suc loss did ever befall any other man, or can ever befa me again. As far as books are concerned I am

Totus teres atque rotundus,

and may set fortune at defiance. The books, whic had been my father's, had, most of them, his arn

* Mr. Gregson was chaplain to Mr. Throckmorton.

on the inside cover, but the rest no mark, neither his name nor mine. I could mourn for them like Sancho for his Dapple, but it would avail me nothing.

You will oblige me much by sending me "Crazy Kate." A gentleman last winter promised me both her and the "Lace-maker," but he went to London, that place in which, as in the grave, "all things are forgotten," and I have never seen either of them.*

I begin to find some prospect of a conclusion, of the Iliad at least, now opening upon me, having reached the eighteenth book. Your letter found me yesterday in the very fact of dispersing the whole host of Troy, by the voice only of Achilles. There is nothing extravagant in the idea, for you have witnessed a similar effect attending even such a voice as mine, at midnight, from a garret window, on the dogs of a whole parish, whom I have put to flight in a moment.

W. C.

His high sense of the character and qualifications of Lady Hesketh is pleasingly expressed in the following letter, where Mrs. Montagu's coteries in Portman-square are also alluded to.

* He alludes to engravings of these two characters, which had acquired much popularity with the public, especially Crazy Kate, beginning,

"There often wanders one, whom better days," &c. &c.

TO LADY HESKETH.

The Lodge, May 12, 1788.

It is probable, my dearest Coz, that I shall not be able to write much, but as much as I can I will. The time between rising and breakfast is all that I can at present find, and this morning I lay longer than usual.

In the style of the lady's note to you I can easily perceive a smatch of her character.* Neither men nor women write with such neatness of expression, who have not given a good deal of attention to language, and qualified themselves by study. At the same time it gave me much more pleasure to observe, that my Coz, though not standing on the pinnacle of renown quite so elevated as that which lifts Mrs. Montagu to the clouds, falls in no degree short of her in this particular; so that, should she make you a member of her academy,† she will do it

* Mrs. Montagu.

† The Blue-stocking Club, or Bas-bleu.

The following is the account of the origin of the Blue-stocking Club, extracted from Boswell's "Life of Johnson:"—"About this time (1781) it was much the fashion for several ladies to have evening assemblies, where the fair sex might participate in conversation with literary and ingenious men, animated by a desire to please. These societies were denominated *Blue-stocking Clubs*, the origin of which title being little known, it may be worth while to relate it. One of the most eminent members of these societies, when they first commenced, was Mr. Stillingfleet,‡ whose dress was remarkably

‡ Mr. Benjamin Stillingfleet, author of tracts relating to natural history, &c.

honour. Suspect me not of flattering you, for I abhor the thought; neither *will* you suspect it. Recollect, that it is an invariable rule with me never to pay compliments to those I love.

Two days, *en suite*, I have walked to Gayhurst,* a longer journey than I have walked on foot these seventeen years. The first day I went alone, designing merely to make the experiment, and choosing to be at liberty to return at whatsoever point of my pilgrimage I should find myself fatigued. For I was not without suspicion that years, and some other things no less injurious than years, viz. melancholy and distress of mind, might by this time have unfitted me for such achievements. But I found it otherwise. I reached the church, which stands, as you know, in the garden, in fifty-five minutes, and returned in ditto time to Weston. The next day I took the same walk with Mr. Powley, having a desire to show him the prettiest place in the country.† I not only performed these two excursions without injury to my health, but have by means of them gained indisputable proof that my ambulatory faculty

grave, and in particular it was observed that *he wore blue stockings*. Such was the excellence of his conversation, that his absence was felt as so great a loss, that it used to be said, 'We can do nothing without the *blue stockings*;' and thus by degrees the title was established. Miss Hannah More has admirably described a *Blue-stocking Club*, in her '*Bas Bleu*,' a poem in which many of the persons who were most conspicuous there are mentioned."

* A large mansion near Newport Pagnel, formerly belonging to Miss Wright.

† The Rev. Mr. Powley married Mrs. Unwin's daughter.

is not yet impaired; a discovery which, considering that to my feet alone I am likely, as I have ever been, to be indebted always for my transportation from place to place, I find very delectable.

You will find in the last Gentleman's Magazine a sonnet, addressed to Henry Cowper, signed T. H. I am the writer of it. No creature knows this but yourself; you will make what use of the intelligence you shall see good.

W. C.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

The Lodge, May 24, 1788.

My dear Friend—For two excellent prints I return you my sincere acknowledgments. I cannot say that poor Kate resembles much the original, who was neither so young nor so handsome as the pencil has represented her; but she has a figure well suited to the account given of her in "The Task," and has a face exceedingly expressive of despairing melancholy. The Lace-maker is accidentally a good likeness of a young woman, once our neighbour, who was hardly less handsome than the picture twenty years ago; but the loss of one husband, and the acquisition of another, have, since that time, impaired her much; yet she might still be supposed to have sat to the artist.*

We dined yesterday with your friend and mine,

* Poor Kate and the Lace-maker were portraits drawn from *real life.*

the most companionable and domestic Mr. C——.* The whole kingdom can hardly furnish a spectacle more pleasing to a man who has a taste for true happiness, than himself, Mrs. C——, and their multitudinous family. Seven long miles are interposed between us, or perhaps I should oftener have an opportunity of declaiming on this subject.

I am now in the nineteenth book of the Iliad, and on the point of displaying such feats of heroism performed by Achilles as make all other achievements trivial. I may well exclaim, "O for a Muse of fire!" especially having not only a great host to cope with, but a great river also; much, however, may be done when Homer leads the way. I should not have chosen to have been the original author of such a business, even though all the Nine had stood at my elbow. Time has wonderful effects. We admire that in an antient, for which we should send a modern bard to Bedlam.

I saw at Mr. C ——'s a great curiosity—an antique bust of Paris, in Parian marble. You will conclude that it interested me exceedingly. I pleased myself with supposing that it once stood in Helen's chamber. It was in fact brought from the Levant, and, though not well mended, (for it had suffered much by time,) is an admirable performance.

W. C.

Mr. Bull had urged Cowper once more to employ the powers of his pen, in what he so eminently ex-

* Mr. Chester, of Chicheley, near Newport Pagnel.

celled, the composition of hymns, expressive of resignation to the will of God. It is much to be lamented that he here declines what would so essentially have promoted the interests of true religion.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM BULL.*

Weston, May 25, 1788.

My dear Friend—Ask possibilities and they shall be performed; but ask not hymns from a man suffering by despair as I do. I could not sing the Lord's song were it to save my life, banished as I am, not to a strange land, but to a remoteness from his presence, in comparison with which the distance from east to west is no distance, is vicinity and cohesion. I dare not, either in prose or verse, allow myself to express a frame of mind which I am conscious does not belong to me; least of all can I venture to use the language of absolute resignation, lest, only counterfeiting, I should for that very reason be taken strictly at my word, and lose all my remaining comfort. Can there not be found among those translations of Madame Guyon somewhat that might serve the purpose? I should think there might. Submission to the will of Christ, my memory tells me, is a theme that pervades them all. If so, your request is performed already; and if any alteration in them should be necessary, I will with all my heart make it. I have no objection to giving the graces of the foreigner an English dress, but insuperable ones to all false pretences and affected exhibitions of what I do not feel.

* Private Correspondence.

Hoping that you will have the grace to be resigned most perfectly to this disappointment, which you should not have suffered had it been in my power to prevent it, I remain, with our best remembrances to Mr. Thornton,

Ever affectionately yours,

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

The Lodge, May 27, 1788.

My dear Coz.—The General, in a letter which came yesterday, sent me inclosed a copy of my sonnet; thus introducing it.

"I send a copy of verses somebody has written in the Gentleman's Magazine for April last. Independent of my partiality towards the subject, I think the lines themselves are good."

Thus it appears that my poetical adventure has succeeded to my wish, and I write to him by this post, on purpose to inform him that the somebody in question is myself.*

* Mr. Henry Cowper, who was Reading-Clerk in the House of Lords, was remarkable for the clearness and melody of his voice. This qualification is happily alluded to by the poet, in the following lines:—

"Thou art not voice alone, but hast besides
Both heart and head, and could'st with music sweet
Of Attic phrase and senatorial tone,
Like thy renown'd forefathers,† far and wide
Thy fame diffuse, praised, not for utterance meet
Of others' speech, but magic of thy own."

† Lord-chancellor Cowper, and Spencer Cowper, Chief-justice of Chester.

I no longer wonder that Mrs. Montagu stands at the head of all that is called learned, and that every critic vails his bonnet to her superior judgment; I am now reading, and have reached the middle of her Essay on the Genius of Shakspeare; a book of which, strange as it may seem, though I must have read it formerly, I had absolutely forgot the existence.*

The learning, the good sense, the sound judgment, and the wit displayed in it, fully justify not only my compliment, but all compliments that either have been already paid to her talents, or shall be paid hereafter. Voltaire, I doubt not, rejoiced that his antagonist wrote in English, and that his countrymen could not possibly be judges of the dispute. Could they have known how much she was in the right, and by how many thousand miles the bard of Avon is superior to all their dramatists, the French critic would have lost half his fame among them.

I saw at Mr. Chester's a head of Paris; an antique of Parian marble. His uncle, who left him the estate, brought it, as I understand, from the Levant: you may suppose I viewed it with all the enthusiasm that belongs to a translator of Homer. It is in reality a great curiosity, and highly valuable.

* This essay contributed very much to establish the literary character of Mrs. Montagu, as a woman of taste and learning; and to vindicate Shakspeare from the sallies of the wit of Voltaire, who comprehended his genius as little as the immortal poem of the "Paradise Lost." It is well known how Young replied to his frivolous raillery on the latter work:—

"Thou art so witty, profligate, and thin,
At once we think thee Milton's Death and Sin."

Our friend Sephus* has sent me two prints; the Lace-maker and Crazy Kate. These also I have contemplated with pleasure, having, as you know, a particular interest in them. The former of them is not more beautiful than a lace-maker once our neighbour at Olney; though the artist has assembled as many charms in her countenance as I ever saw in any countenance, one excepted. Kate is both younger and handsomer than the original from which I drew, but she is in a good style, and as mad as need be.

How does this hot weather suit thee, my dear, in London? as for me, with all my colonnades and bowers, I am quite oppressed by it.

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

The Lodge, June 3, 1788.

My dearest Cousin—The excessive heat of these last few days was indeed oppressive; but, excepting the languor that it occasioned both in my mind and body, it was far from being prejudicial to me. It opened ten thousand pores, by which as many mischiefs, the effects of long obstruction, began to breathe themselves forth abundantly. Then came an east wind, baneful to me at all times, but following so closely such a sultry season, uncommonly noxious. To speak in the seaman's phrase, not entirely strange to you, *I was taken all aback;* and

* Mr. Hill.

the humours which would have escaped, if old Eurus would have given them leave, finding every door shut, have fallen into my eyes. But, in a country like this, poor miserable mortals must be content to suffer all that sudden and violent changes can inflict; and if they are quit for about half the plagues that Caliban calls down on Prospero, they may say, "We are well off," and dance for joy, if the rheumatism or cramp will let them.

Did you ever see an advertisement by one Fowle, a dancing-master of Newport-Pagnel? If not, I will contrive to send it to you for your amusement. It is the most extravagantly ludicrous affair of the kind I ever saw. The author of it had the good hap to be crazed, or he had never produced any thing half so clever; for you will ever observe, that they who are said to have lost their wits have more than other people. It is therefore only a slander, with which envy prompts the malignity of persons in their senses to asperse wittier than themselves. But there are countries in the world where the mad have justice done them, where they are revered as the subjects of inspiration, and consulted as oracles. Poor Fowle would have made a figure there.

W. C.

In the next letter Cowper declines writing further on the subject of the slave trade: the horrors connected with it are the reasons assigned for this refusal. His past efforts in that cause are the best evidence of his ability to write upon it with powerful effect.

The sensitive mind of Cowper shrunk with terror from these appalling atrocities.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.*

Weston Lodge, June 5, 1788.

My dear Friend—It is a comfort to me that you are so kind as to make allowance for me, in consideration of my being so busy a man. The truth is that, could I write with both hands, and with both at the same time, verse with one and prose with the other, I should not even so be able to dispatch both my poetry and my arrears of correspondence faster than I have need. The only opportunities that I can find for conversing with distant friends are in the early hour (and that sometimes reduced to half a one) before breakfast. Neither am I exempt from hindrances, which, while they last, are insurmountable; especially one, by which I have been occasionally a sufferer all my life. I mean an inflammation of the eyes; a malady under which I have lately laboured, and from which I am at this moment only in a small degree relieved. The last sudden change of the weather, from heat almost insupportable to a cold as severe as is commonly felt in midwinter, would have disabled me entirely for all sorts of scribbling, had I not favoured the weak part a little, and given my eyes a respite.

It is certain that we do not live far from Olney, but small as the distance is, it has too often the effect of a separation between the Beans and us.

* Private Correspondence.

He is a man with whom, when I can converse at all, I can converse on terms perfectly agreeable to myself; who does not distress me with forms, nor yet disgust me by the neglect of them; whose manners are easy and natural, and his observations always sensible. I often, therefore, wish them nearer neighbours.

We have heard nothing of the Powleys since they left us, a fortnight ago, and should be uneasy at their silence on such an occasion, did we not know that she cannot write, and that he, on his first return to his parish after a long absence, may possibly find it difficult. Her we found much improved in her health and spirits, and him, as always, affectionate and obliging. It was an agreeable visit, and, as it was ordered for me, I happened to have better spirits than I have enjoyed at any time since.

I shall rejoice if your friend Mr. Philips, influenced by what you told him of my present engagements, shall wave his application to me for a poem on the slave trade. I account myself honoured by his intention to solicit me on the subject, and it would give me pain to refuse him, which inevitably I shall be constrained to do. The more I have considered it, the more I have convinced myself that it is not a promising theme for verse. General censure on the iniquity of the practice will avail nothing. The world has been overwhelmed with such remarks already, and to particularize all the horrors of it were an employment for the mind both of the poet and his readers, of which they would necessarily soon grow weary. For my own part, I

cannot contemplate the subject very nearly without a degree of abhorrence that affects my spirits, and sinks them below the pitch requisite for success in verse. Lady Hesketh recommended it to me some months since, and then I declined it for these reasons, and for others which need not be mentioned here.

I return you many thanks for all your intelligence concerning the success of the gospel in far countries, and shall rejoice in a sight of Mr. Van Lier's letter,* which, being so voluminous, I think you should bring with you, when you take your flight to Weston, rather than commit to any other conveyance.

Remember that it is now summer, and that the summer flies fast, and that we shall be happy to see you and yours as speedily and for as long a time as you can afford. We are sorry, truly so, that Mrs. Newton is so frequently and so much indisposed. Accept our best love to you both, and believe me, my dear friend,

Affectionately yours,

W. C.

After what I have said on the subject of my writing engagements, I doubt not but you will excuse my transcribing the verses to Mrs. Montagu,†

* Mr. Van Lier was a Dutch minister, to whom the perusal of Mr. Newton's works had been made eminently useful. We shall have occasion to allude to this subject in its proper place.

† These verses "On Mrs. Montagu's Feather Hangings"

especially considering that my eyes are weary with what I have written this morning already. I feel somewhat like an impropriety in referring you to the next "Gentleman's Magazine," but at the present juncture I know not how to do better.

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are characterised by elegant taste and a delicate turn of compliment. We insert an extract from them, as descriptive of her evening parties in Portman-square, the resort of cultivated wit and fashion, and so frequently alluded to in the interesting Memoirs of Mrs. More.

To the same patroness resort,
Secure of favour at her court,
Strong genius, from whose forge of thought
Forms rise, to quick perfection wrought,
Which, though new-born, with vigour move,
Like Pallas, springing armed from Jove—
Imagination, scattering round
Wild roses over furrow'd ground,
Which Labour of his frowns beguile,
And teach Philosophy a smile--
Wit, flashing on Religion's side,
Whose fires, to sacred Truth applied,
The gem, though luminous before,
Obtrude on human notice more,
Like sun-beams on the golden height
Of some tall temple playing bright—
Well-tutor'd Learning, from his books
Dismiss'd with grave, not haughty, looks,
Their order, on his shelves exact,
Not more harmonious or compact
Than that, to which he keeps confined
The various treasures of his mind—
All these to Montagu's repair,
Ambitious of a shelter there.

The death of Ashley Cowper, the father of Lady Hesketh and of Miss Theodora Cowper, the object of the poet's fond and early attachment, occurred at this period, and is the subject of the following letters. His reflections on this occasion are interesting and edifying.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

Weston, June 8, 1788.

My dear Friend—Your letter brought me the very first intelligence of the event it mentions. My last letter from Lady Hesketh gave me reason enough to expect it, but the certainty of it was unknown to me till I learned it by your information. If gradual decline, the consequence of great age, be a sufficient preparation of the mind to encounter such a loss, our minds were certainly prepared to meet it: yet to you I need not say that no preparation can supersede the feelings of the heart on such occasions. While our friends yet live inhabitants of the same world with ourselves, they seem still to live to *us;* we are sure that they sometimes think of us; and, however improbable it may seem, it is never impossible that we may see each other once again. But the grave, like a great gulf, swallows all such expectations, and, in the moment when a beloved friend sinks into it, a thousand tender recollections awaken a regret that will be felt in spite of all reasonings, and let our warnings have been what they may. Thus it is I take my last

leave of poor Ashley, whose heart towards me was ever truly parental, and to whose memory I owe a tenderness and respect that will never leave me.

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

The Lodge, June 10, 1788.

My dear Coz.—Your kind letter of precaution to Mr. Gregson sent him hither as soon as chapel service was ended in the evening. But he found me already apprized of the event that occasioned it, by a line from Sephus, received a few hours before. My dear uncle's death awakened in me many reflections, which for a time sunk my spirits. A man like him would have been mourned had he doubled the age he reached. At any age his death would have been felt as a loss, that no survivor could repair. And though it was not probable that, for my own part, I should ever see him more, yet the consciousness that he still lived was a comfort to me. Let it comfort us now, that we have lost him only a time when nature could afford him to us no longer that, as his life was blameless, so was his death without anguish, and that he is gone to heaven. I know not that human life, in its most prosperous state can present any thing to our wishes half so desirable as such a close of it.

Not to mingle this subject with others that will ill suit with it, I will add no more at present t

warm hope that you and your sister * will be able effectually to avail yourselves of all the consolatory matter with which it abounds. You gave yourselves, while he lived, to a father, whose life was doubtless prolonged by your attentions, and whose tenderness of disposition made him always deeply sensible of your kindness in this respect, as well as in many others. His old age was the happiest that I have ever known, and I give you both joy of having had so fair an opportunity, and of having so well used it, to approve yourselves equal to the calls of such a duty in the sight of God and man.

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

The Lodge, June 15, 1788.

Although I know that you must be very much occupied on the present most affecting occasion, yet, not hearing from you, I began to be very uneasy on your account, and to fear that your health might have suffered by the fatigue both of body and spirits that you must have undergone, till a letter that reached me yesterday from the General † set my heart at rest, so far as that cause of anxiety was in question. He speaks of my uncle in the tenderest terms, such as show how truly sensible he was of the amiableness and excellence of his character,

* Miss Theodora Cowper.

† General Cowper was brother to Ashley Cowper.

and how deeply he regrets his loss. We have indeed lost one who has not left his like in the present generation of our family, and whose equal, in all respects, no future of it will probably produce. My memory retains so perfect an impression of him, that, had I been painter instead of poet, I could from those faithful traces have perpetuated his face and form with the most minute exactness; and this I the rather wonder at, because some with whom I was equally conversant five-and-twenty years ago have almost faded out of all recollection with me. But he made impression not soon to be effaced, and was in figure, in temper, in manner, and in numerous other respects such as I shall never behold again. I often think what a joyful interview there has been between him and some of his contemporaries who went before him. The truth of the matter is, my dear, that they are the happy ones, and that we shall never be such ourselves till we have joined the party. Can there be anything so worthy of our warmest wishes as to enter on an eternal, unchangeable state, in blessed fellowship and communion with those whose society we valued most, and for the best reasons, while they continued with us? A few steps more through a vain, foolish world, and this happiness will be yours. But be not hasty, my dear, to accomplish thy journey! For of all that live thou art one whom I can least spare; for thou also art one, who shalt not leave thy equal behind thee.

W. C.

The contrast between the awful scenes in nature, and those produced by the passions of men, is finely drawn in the following letter.

TO THE REV. WALTER BAGOT.

Weston, June 17, 1788.

My dear Walter—You think me, no doubt, a tardy correspondent, and such I am, but not willingly. Many hindrances have intervened, and the most difficult to surmount have been those which the east and north-east winds have occasioned, breathing winter upon the roses of June, and inflaming my eyes, ten times more sensible of the inconvenience than they. The vegetables of England seem, like our animals, of a hardier and bolder nature than those of other countries. In France and Italy flowers blow because it is warm, but here in spite of the cold. The season however is somewhat mended at present, and my eyes with it. Finding myself this morning in perfect ease of body, I seize the welcome opportunity to do something at least towards the discharge of my arrears to you.

I am glad that you liked my song, and, if I liked the others myself so well as that I sent you, I would transcribe for you them also. But I sent *that*, because I accounted it the best. Slavery, and especially negro slavery, because the cruellest, is an odious and disgusting subject. Twice or thrice I have been assailed with entreaties to write a poem on that theme. But, besides that it would be in some sort treason against Homer to abandon him for any

other matter, I felt myself so much hurt in my spirits the moment I entered on the contemplation of it, that I have at last determined absolutely to have nothing more to do with it. There are some scenes of horror on which my imagination can dwell not without some complacence. But, then they are such scenes as God, not man, produces. In earthquakes, high winds, tempestuous seas, there is the grand as well as the terrible. But, when man is active to disturb, there is such meanness in the design and such cruelty in the execution, that I both hate and despise the whole operation, and feel it a degradation of Poetry to employ her in the description of it. I hope also, that the generality of my countrymen have more generosity in their nature than to want the fiddle of verse to go before them in the performance of an act to which they are invited by the loudest calls of humanity.

Breakfast calls, and then Homer,

Ever yours,

W. C.

Erratum.—Instead of Mr. Wilberforce as author of "Manners of the Great," read Hannah More.

My paper mourns, and my seal. It is for the death of a venerable uncle, Ashley Cowper, at the age of eighty-seven.

Cowper's description of the variations of climate, and their influence on the nerves and constitution, is

what most of his readers probably know from frequent experience of their effects.

TO MRS. KING.*

The Lodge, June 19, 1788.

My dear Madam—You must think me a tardy correspondent, unless you have had charity enough for me to suppose that I have met with other hindrances than those of indolence and inattention. With these I cannot charge myself, for I am never idle by choice; and inattentive to you I certainly have not been, but, on the contrary, can safely affirm that every day I have thought on you. My silence has been occasioned by a malady to which I have all my life been subject—an inflammation of the eyes. The last sudden change of weather from excessive heat to a wintry degree of cold occasioned it, and at the same time gave me a pinch of the rheumatic kind; from both which disorders I have but just recovered. I do not suppose that our climate has been much altered since the days of our forefathers, the Picts;† but certainly the human constitution in this country has been altered much. Inured as we are from our cradles to every vicissitude in a climate more various than any other, and in possession of all that modern refinement has been able to contrive for our security, we are yet as subject to blights as the tenderest blossoms of spring; and are so well admonished of every change

* Private Correspondence.

† The Picts were not our ancestors.

in the atmosphere by our bodily feelings as hardly to have any need of a weather-glass to mark them. For this we are, no doubt, indebted to the multitude of our accommodations; for it was not possible to retain the hardiness that originally belonged to our race, under the delicate management to which for many years we have now been accustomed. I can hardly doubt that a bull-dog or a game-cock might be made just as susceptible of injuries from weather as myself, were he dieted and in all respects accommodated as I am. Or, if the project did not succeed in the first instance, (for we ourselves did not become what we are at once,) in process of time, however, and in a course of many generations, it would certainly take effect. Let such a dog be fed in his infancy with pap, Naples' biscuit, and boiled chicken; let him be wrapt in flannel at night, sleep on a good feather-bed, and ride out in a coach for, an airing; and if his posterity do not become slight-limbed, puny, and valetudinarian, it will be a wonder. Thus our parents, and their parents, and the parents of both were managed; and thus ourselves; and the consequence is, that instead of being weather-proof, even without clothing, furs and flannels are not warm enough to defend us. It is observable, however, that though we have by these means lost much of our pristine vigour, our days are not the fewer. We live as long as those whom, on account of the sturdiness of their frame, the poets supposed to have been the progeny of oaks. Perhaps too they had little feeling, and for that reason also might be imagined to be so descended. For a very

robust athletic habit seems inconsistent with much sensibility. But sensibility is the *sine quâ non* of real happiness. If, therefore, our lives have not been shortened, and if our feelings have been rendered more exquisite as our habit of body has become more delicate, on the whole perhaps we have no cause to complain, but are rather gainers by our degeneracy.

Do you consider what you do, when you ask one poet his opinion of another? Yet I think I can give you an honest answer to your question, and without the least wish to nibble. Thomson was admirable in description; but it always seemed to me that there was somewhat of affectation in his style, and that his numbers are sometimes not well harmonized. I could wish too, with Dr. Johnson, that he had confined himself to this country; for, when he describes what he never saw, one is forced o read him with some allowance for possible misepresentation. He was, however, a true poet, and is lasting fame has proved it. Believe me, my dear adam, with my best respects to Mr. King, most ily yours,

W. C.

P. S. I am extremely sorry that you have been much indisposed, and hope that your next will g me a more favourable account of your health. ow not why, but I rather suspect that you do llow yourself sufficient air and exercise. The cians call them non-naturals, I suppose to deter patients from the use of them.

The providence of God and the brevity of human life are subjects of profitable remark in the following letter.

TO SAMUEL ROSE, ESQ.

Weston, June 23, 1788.

When I tell you that an unanswered letter troubles my conscience in some degree like a crime, you will think me endued with a most heroic patience, who have so long submitted to that trouble on account of yours not answered yet. But the truth is, that I have been much engaged. Homer (you know) affords me constant employment; besides which, I have rather what may be called, considering the privacy with which I have long lived, a numerous correspondence: to one of my friends, in particular, a near and much loved relation, I write weekly, and sometimes twice in a week; nor are these my only excuses: the sudden changes of the weather have much affected me, and especially with a disorder most unfavourable to letter-writing, an inflammation in my eyes. With all these apologies, I approach you once more, not altogether despairing of forgiveness.

It has pleased God to give us rain, without which this part of the country at least must soon have become a desert. The meadows have been parched to a January brown, and we have foddered our cattle for some time, as in the winter. The goodness and power of God are never (I believe) so universally acknowledged as at the end of a long

drought. Man is naturally a self-sufficient animal, and, in all concerns that seem to lie within the sphere of his own ability, thinks little or not at all of the need he always has of protection and furtherance from above. But he is sensible that the clouds will not assemble at his bidding, and that, though the clouds assemble, they will not fall in showers, because he commands them. When therefore at last the blessing descends, you shall hear even in the streets the most irreligious and thoughtless with one voice exclaim, "Thank God!"—confessing themselves indebted to his favour, and willing, at least so far as words go, to give him the glory. I can hardly doubt, therefore, that the earth is sometimes parched, and the crops endangered, in order that the multitude may not want a memento to whom they owe them, nor absolutely forget the power on which all depend for all things.

Our solitary part of the year is over. Mrs. Unwin's daughter and son-in-law have lately spent some time with us. We shall shortly receive from London our old friends the Newtons, (he was once minister of Olney,) and, when they leave us, we expect that Lady Hesketh will succeed them, perhaps to spend the summer here, and possibly the winter also. The summer indeed is leaving us at a rapid rate, as do all the seasons; and, though I have marked their flight so often, I know not which is the swiftest. Man is never so deluded as when he dreams of his own duration. The answer of the old patriarch to Pharaoh may be adopted by every man at the close of the longest life: "Few and

evil have been the days of the years of my pilgrimage." Whether we look back from fifty, or from twice fifty, the past appears equally a dream; and we can only be said truly to have lived, while we have been profitably employed. Alas, then! making the necessary deductions, how short is life! Were men in general to save themselves all the steps they take to no purpose, or to a bad one, what numbers, who are now active, would become sedentary!

Thus I have sermonized through my paper. Living where you live, you can bear with me the better. I always follow the leading of my unconstrained thoughts, when I write to a friend, be they grave or otherwise. Homer reminds me of you every day. I am now in the twenty-first Iliad.

Adieu,

W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.*

June 24, 1788.

My dear Friend—I rejoice that my letter found you at all points so well prepared to answer it according to our wishes. I have written to Lady Hesketh to apprise her of your intended journey hither, and she, having as yet made no assignation with us herself, will easily adjust her measures to the occasion.

I have not lately had an opportunity of seeing

* Private Correspondence.

Mr. Bean. The late rains, which have revived the hopes of the farmers, have intercepted our communication. I hear, however, that he meets with not a little trouble in his progress towards a reformation of Olney manners; and that the Sabbath, which he wishes to have hallowed by a stricter and more general observation of it, is, through the brutality of the lowest order, a day of more turbulence and riot than any other. At the latter end of last week he found himself obliged to make another trip to the justice, in company with two or three of the principal inhabitants. What passed I have not learned; but I understand their errand to have been, partly at least, to efface the evil impressions made on his worship's mind, by a man who had applied a day or two before for a warrant against the constable; which, however, he did not obtain. I rather fear that the constables are not altogether judicious in the exercise either of their justice or their mercy. Some, who may have seemed proper objects of punishment, they have released, on a promise of better behaviour; and others, whose offence has been personal against themselves, though in other respects less guilty, they have set in the stocks. The ladies, however, and of course the ladies of Silver-End in particular, give them the most trouble, being always active on these occasions, as well as clamorous, and both with impunity. For the sex are privileged in the free use of their tongues and of their nails, the Parliament having never yet laid them under any penal restrictions; and they employ them accordingly.

Johnson, the constable, lost much of his skin, and still more of his coat, in one of those Sunday battles; and, had not Ashburner hastened to his aid, had probably been completely stripped of both. With such a zeal are these fair ones animated, though, unfortunately for all parties, rather erroneously.

What you tell me of the effect that the limitation of numbers to tonnage is likely to have on the slave trade, gives me the greatest pleasure.* Should it amount, in the issue, to an abolition of the traffic, I shall account it indeed an argument of great wisdom in our youthful minister. A silent and indirect way of doing it, is, I suppose, the only safe one. At the same time, in how horrid a light does it place the trade itself, when it comes to be proved by consequences that the mere article of a little elbow-room for the poor creatures in their passage to the islands could not be secured by an order of Parliament, without the utter annihilation of it! If so it prove, no man deserving to be called a man, can say that it ought to subsist a moment longer. My writing-time is expended, and breakfast is at hand. With our joint love to the trio, and our best wishes for your good journey to Weston, I remain, my dear friend,

Affectionately yours,

W. C.

The next letter contains an interesting incident,

* The credit of having introduced this regulation is due to the late much respected Sir William Dolben, Bart.

recorded of his dog Beau, and the verses composed on the occasion.

TO LADY HESKETH.

The Lodge, June 27, 1788.

For the sake of a longer visit, my dearest Coz, I can be well content to wait. The country, this country at least, is pleasant at all times, and when winter is come, or near at hand, we shall have the better chance for being snug. I know your passion for retirement indeed, or for what we call *deedy* retirement, and, the F——s intending to return to Bath with their mother, when her visit at the Hall is over, you will then find here exactly the retirement in question. I have made in the orchard the best winter-walk in all the parish, sheltered from the east and from the north-east, and open to the sun, except at his rising, all the day. Then we will have Homer and Don Quixote; and then we will have saunter and chat and one laugh more before we die. Our orchard is alive with creatures of all kinds; poultry of every denomination swarms in it, and pigs, the drollest in the world!

I rejoice, that we have a cousin Charles also, as well as a cousin Henry, who has had the address to win the good likings of the Chancellor. May he fare the better for it! As to myself, I have long since ceased to have any expectations from that quarter. Yet, if he were indeed mortified as you say, (and no doubt you have particular reasons for thinking so,) and repented to that degree of his

hasty exertions in favour of the present occupant, who can tell? He wants neither means nor management, but can easily at some future period redress the evil, if he chooses to do it. But in the mean time life steals away, and shortly neither he will be in circumstances to do me a kindness, nor I to receive one at his hands. Let him make haste, therefore, or he will die a promise in my debt, which he will never be able to perform.* Your communications on this subject are as safe as you can wish them. We divulge nothing but what might appear in the magazine, nor that without great consideration.

I must tell you a feat of my dog Beau. Walking by the river side, I observed some water-lilies floating at a little distance from the bank. They are a large white flower, with an orange-coloured eye, very beautiful. I had a desire to gather one, and, having your long cane in my hand, by the help of it endeavoured to bring one of them within my reach. But the attempt proved vain, and I walked forward. Beau had all the while observed me very attentively. Returning soon after toward the same place, I observed him plunge into the river, while I was about forty yards distant from him; and, when I had nearly reached the spot, he swam to land with a lily in his mouth, which he came and laid at my foot.

Mr. Rose, whom I have mentioned to you, as a

* Lord Thurlow, it will be remembered, pledged himself to make some provision for Cowper, if he became Lord Chancellor.

visitor of mine for the first time soon after you left us, writes me word that he has seen my ballads against the slave-mongers, but not in print.* Where he met with them I know not. Mr. Bull begged hard for leave to print them at Newport Pagnel, and I refused, thinking that it would be wrong to anticipate the nobility, gentry, and others, at whose pressing instance I composed them, in their designs to print them. But perhaps I need not have been so squeamish: for the opportunity to publish them in London seems now not only ripe but rotten. I am well content. There is but one of them with which I am myself satisfied, though I have heard them all well spoken of. But there are very few things of my own composition that I can endure to read, when they have been written a month, though at first they seem to me to be all perfection.

Mrs. Unwin, who has been much the happier since the time of your return hither has been in some sort settled, begs me to make her kindest remembrance. Yours, my dear, most truly,

W. C.

The following verses are so singularly beautiful, and interesting from the incident which gave rise to them, that, though they are inserted in the Poems, we cannot refrain from introducing them, in connexion with the letter which records the occasion of their being written.

* We have elsewhere observed that they never were printed as ballads, but were inserted in his works.

THE DOG AND THE WATER LILY.

No Fable.

The noon was shady, and soft airs
Swept Ouse's silent tide,
When, 'scaped from literary cares,
I wandered on his side.

My spaniel, prettiest of his race,
And high in pedigree,
(Two nymphs* adorn'd with every grace
That spaniel found for me)

Now wantoned, lost in flags and reeds,
Now starting into sight,
Pursued the swallow o'er the meads
With scarce a slower flight.

It was the time when Ouse displayed
His lilies newly blown;
Their beauties I intent surveyed,
And one I wished my own.

With cane extended, far I sought
To steer it close to land;
But still the prize, though nearly caught,
Escaped my eager hand.

Beau marked my unsuccessful pains
With fixt considerate face,
And, puzzling, set his puppy brains
To comprehend the case.

But, with a chirrup clear and strong,
Dispersing all his dream,
I thence withdrew, and followed long
The windings of the stream.

* The Miss Gunnings, the daughters of Sir Robert ning, Bart.

My ramble ended, I returned,
Beau, trotting far before,
The floating wreath again discerned,
And plunging left the shore.

I saw him with that lily cropped,
Impatient swim, to meet
My quick approach, and soon he dropped
The treasure at my feet.

Charmed with the sight, "The world," I cried,
"Shall hear of this thy deed;"
My dog shall mortify the pride
Of man's superior breed.

But chief myself I will enjoin,
Awake at duty's call,
To show a love as prompt as thine
To Him who gives me all."

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.*

July 6, 1788.

My dear Friend—"Bitter constraint and sad occasion dear" have compelled me to draw on you for the sum of twenty pounds, payable to John Higgins, Esq. or order. The draft bears date July 5th.—You will excuse my giving you this trouble, in consideration that I am a poet, and can consequently draw for money much easier than I can earn it.

I heard of you a few days since, from Walter Bagot, who called here and told me that you were gone, I think, into Rutlandshire, to settle the ac-

* Private Correspondence.

counts of a large estate unliquidated many years. Intricacies that would turn my brains are play to you. But I give you joy of a long vacation at hand, when I suppose that even you will find it pleasant, if not to be idle, at least not to be hemmed around by business.

Yours ever,

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

The Lodge, July 28, 1788.

It is in vain that you tell me that you have no talent at description, while in fact you describe better than any body. You have given me a most complete idea of your mansion and its situation; and I doubt not that, with your letter in my hand by way of map, could I be set down on the spot in a moment, I should find myself qualified to take my walks and my pastime in whatever quarter of your paradise it should please me the most to visit. We also, as you know, have scenes at Weston worthy of description; but, because you know them well, I will only say, that one of them has, within these few days, been much improved; I mean the lime walk. By the help of the axe and the wood-bill, which have of late been constantly employed in cutting out all straggling branches that intercepted the arch, Mr. Throckmorton has now defined it with such exactness, that no cathedral in the world

can show one of more magnificence or beauty. I bless myself that I live so near it; for, were it distant several miles, it would be well worth while to visit it, merely as an object of taste; not to mention the refreshment of such a gloom both to the eyes and spirits. And these are the things which our modern improvers of parks and pleasure-grounds have displaced without mercy; because, forsooth, they are rectilinear. It is a wonder that they do not quarrel with the sunbeams for the same reason.

Have you seen the account of five hundred celebrated authors now living?* I am one of them; but stand charged with the high crime and misdemeanour of totally neglecting method; an accusation, which, if the gentleman would take the pains to read me, he would find sufficiently refuted. I am conscious at least myself of having laboured much in the arrangement of my matter, and of having given to the several parts of every book of "The Task," as well as to each poem in the first volume, that sort of slight connexion which poetry demands; for in poetry (except professedly of the didactic kind) a logical precision would be stiff, pedantic, and ridiculous. But there is no pleasing some critics; the comfort is, that I am contented whether they be pleased or not. At the same time, to my honour be it spoken, the chronicler of us five hundred prodigies bestows on me, for aught I know, more commendations than on any other of my confraternity. May he live to write the histories of as

* A book full of blunders and scandal, and destitute both of information and interest.

many thousand poets, and find me the very best among them! Amen!

I join with you, my dearest Coz, in wishing that I owned the fee simple of all the beautiful scenes around you, but such emoluments were never designed for poets. Am I not happier than ever poet was in having thee for my Cousin, and in the expectation of thy arrival here whenever Strawberry-hill* shall lose thee?

Ever thine,
W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

The Lodge, August 9, 1788.

The Newtons are still here, and continue with us, I believe, until the 15th of the month. Here is also my friend, Mr. Rose, a valuable young man, who, attracted by the effluvia of my genius, found me out in my retirement last January twelvemonth. I have not permitted him to be idle, but have made him transcribe for me the twelfth book of the Iliad. He brings me the compliments of several of the literati, with whom he is acquainted in town, and tells me, that from Dr. Maclain,† whom he saw lately, he learns that my book is in the hands of sixty different persons at the Hague, who are all enchanted with it; not forgetting the said Dr. Maclain him-

* The celebrated seat of Lord Orford, near Richmond, where Lady Hesketh was then visiting.

† The well-known translator of Mosheim's Ecclesiastical History.

self, who tells him that he reads it every day, and is always the better for it. O rare we!

I have been employed this morning in composing a Latin motto for the king's clock, the embellishments of which are by Mr. Bacon. That gentleman breakfasted with us on Wednesday, having come thirty-seven miles out of his way on purpose to see your Cousin. At his request I have done it, and have made two, he will choose that which liketh him best. Mr. Bacon is a most excellent man, and a most agreeable companion: I would that he lived not so remote, or that he had more opportunity of travelling.

There is not, so far as I know, a syllable of the rhyming correspondence between me and my poor brother left, save and except the six lines of it quoted in yours. I *had* the whole of it, but it perished in the wreck of a thousand other things when I left the Temple.

Breakfast calls. Adieu!

W. C.

TO SAMUEL ROSE, ESQ.

Weston, August 18, 1788.

My dear Friend—I left you with a sensible regret, alleviated only by the consideration, that I shall see you again in October. I was under some concern also, lest, not being able to give you any certain directions myself, nor knowing where you might find a guide, you should wander and fatigue yourself, good walker as you are, before you could

reach Northampton. Perhaps you heard me whistle just after our separation; it was to call back Beau who was running after you with all speed to intreat you to return with me. For my part, I took my own time to return, and did not reach home till after one, and then so weary that I was glad of my great chair; to the comforts of which I added a crust, and a glass of rum and water, not without great occasion. Such a foot-traveller am I.

I am writing on Monday, but whether I shall finish my letter this morning depends on Mrs. Unwin's coming sooner or later down to breakfast. Something tells me that you set off to day for Birmingham; and though it be a sort of Irishism to say here, I beseech you take care of yourself, for the day threatens great heat, I cannot help it; the weather may be cold enough at the time when that good advice shall reach you, but, be it hot or be it cold, to a man who travels as you travel, take care of yourself can never be an unseasonable caution. I am sometimes distressed on this account, for though you are young, and well made for such exploits, those very circumstances are more likely than any thing to betray you into danger.

Consule quid valeant PLANTÆ, quid ferre recusent.

The Newtons left us on Friday. We frequently talked about you after your departure, and every thing that was spoken was to your advantage. I know they will be glad to see you in London, and perhaps, when your summer and autumn rambles

are over, you will afford them that pleasure. The Throckmortons are equally well disposed to you, and them also I recommend to you as a valuable connexion, the rather because you can only cultivate it at Weston.

I have not been idle since you went, having not only laboured as usual at the Iliad, but composed a *spick* and *span* new piece, called "The Dog and the Water Lily," which you shall see when we meet again. I believe I related to you the incident which is the subject of it. I have also read most of Lavater's Aphorisms; they appear to me some of them wise, many of them whimsical, a few of them false, and not a few of them extravagant. *Nil illi medium.* If he finds in a man the feature or quality that he approves, he deifies him; if the contrary, he is a devil. His verdict is in neither case, I suppose, a just one.*

W. C.

* Cowper's strictures on Lavater are rather severe; in a subsequent letter we shall find that he expresses himself almost in the language of a disciple. We believe all men to be physiognomists, that is, they are guided in their estimate of one another by external impressions, until they are furnished with better data to determine their judgment. The countenance is often the faithful mirror of the inward emotions of the soul, in the same manner as the light and shade on the mountain's side exhibit the variations of the atmosphere. In the curious and valuable cabinet of Denon, in Paris, which was sold in 1827, two casts taken from Robespierre and Marat were singularly expressive of the atrocity of their character. The cast of an idiot, in the same collection, denoted the total absence of intellect. But, whatever may be our sentiments on this subject, there is one noble act of bene-

TO MRS. KING.*

August 28, 1788.

My dear Madam—Should you discard me from the number of your correspondents, you would treat me as I seem to deserve, though I do not actually deserve it. I have lately been engaged with company at our house, who resided with us five weeks, and have had much of the rheumatism into the bargain. Not in my fingers, you will say—True. But you know as well as I, that pain, be it where it may, indisposes us to writing.

volence which has justly endeared the name of Lavater to his country. We allude to the celebrated Orphan Institution at Zurich, of which he was the founder. It is a handsome and commodious establishment, where these interesting objects of humanity receive a suitable education, and are fitted for future usefulness. The church is shown where John Gaspar Lavater officiated, surrounded by his youthful auditory; and an humble stone in the churchyard briefly records his name and virtues. His own Orphan-house is the most honourable monument of his fame. It is in visiting scenes like these that we feel the moral dignity of our nature, that the heart becomes expanded with generous emotions, and that we learn to imitate that Divine Master, who went about doing good. The Editor could not avoid regretting that, in his own country, where charity assumes almost every possible form, the Orphan-house is of rare occurrence, though abounding in most of the cities of Switzerland. Where are the philanthropists of Bristol, Birmingham, Liverpool, Manchester, Norwich, and of our other great towns? Surely, to wipe away the tear from the cheek of the orphan, to rescue want from destitution and unprotected innocence from exposure to vice and ruin, must ever be considered to be one of the noblest efforts of Christian benevolence.

* Private Correspondence.

You express some degree of wonder that I found you out to be sedentary, at least much a stayer within doors, without any sufficient data for my direction. Now, if I should guess your figure and stature with equal success, you will deem me not only a poet but a conjurer. Yet in fact I have no pretensions of that sort. I have only formed a picture of you in my own imagination, as we ever do of a person of whom we think much, though we have never seen that person. Your height I conceive to be about five feet five inches, which, though it would make a short man, is yet height enough for a woman. If you insist on an inch or two more, I have no objection. You are not very fat, but somewhat inclined to be fat, and unless you allow yourself a little more air and exercise, will incur some danger of exceeding in your dimensions before you die. Let me, therefore, once more recommend to you to walk a little more, at least in your garden, and to amuse yourself occasionally with pulling up here and there a weed, for it will be an inconvenience to you to be much fatter than you are, at a time of life when your strength will be naturally on the decline. I have given you a fair complexion, a slight tinge of the rose in your cheeks, dark brown hair, and, if the fashion would give you leave to show it, an open and well-formed forehead. To all this I add a pair of eyes not quite black, but nearly approaching to that hue, and very animated. I have not absolutely determined on the shape of your nose, or the form of your mouth; but should you tell me that I have in other respects drawn a

tolerable likeness, have no doubt but I can describe them too. I assure you that though I have a great desire to read him, I have never seen Lavater, nor have availed myself in the least of any of his rules on this occasion. Ah, madam! if with all that sensibility of yours, which exposes you to so much sorrow, and necessarily must expose you to it, in a world like this, I have had the good fortune to make you smile, I have then painted you, whether with a strong resemblance, or with none at all, to very good purpose.*

I had intended to have sent you a little poem, which I have lately finished, but have no room to transcribe it.† You shall have it by another opportunity. Breakfast is on the table, and my time also fails, as well as my paper. I rejoice that a cousin of yours found my volumes agreeable to him, for, being your cousin, I will be answerable for his good taste and judgment.

When I wrote last, I was in mourning for a dear and much-valued uncle, Ashley Cowper. He died at the age of eighty-six. My best respects attend Mr. King; and I am, dear madam,

Most truly yours,

W. C.

* Cowper's fancy was never more erroneously employed. The portrait he here draws of Mrs. King possessed no resemblance to the original.

† The Dog and the Water Lily.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.*

Weston Lodge, Sept. 2, 1788.

My dear Friend—I rejoice that you and yours reached London safe, especially when I reflect that you performed the journey on a day so fatal, as I understand, to others travelling the same road. I found those comforts in your visit which have formerly sweetened all our interviews, in part restored. I knew you; knew you for the same shepherd who was sent to lead me out of the wilderness into the pasture where the chief Shepherd feeds his flock, and felt my sentiments of affectionate friendship for you the same as ever.† But one thing was still wanting, and that thing the crown of all. I shall find it in God's time, if it be not lost for ever. When I say this, I say it trembling; for at what time soever comfort shall come, it will not come without its attendant evil; and, whatever good thing may occur in the interval, I have sad forebodings of the event, having learned by experience that I was born to be persecuted with peculiar fury, and assuredly believing, that, such as my lot has been, it

* Private Correspondence.

† It was a singular delusion under which Cowper laboured, and seems to be inexplicable; but it is not less true that, for many years, he doubted the identity of Mr. Newton. When we see the powers of a great mind liable to such instances of delusion, and occasionally suffering an entire eclipse, how irresistibly are we led to exclaim, "Lord, what is man!"

will be so to the end. This belief is connected in my mind with an observation I have often made, and is perhaps founded in great part upon it: that there is a certain *style* of dispensations maintained by Providence in the dealings of God with every man, which, however the incidents of his life may vary, and though he may be thrown into many different situations, is never exchanged for another. The style of dispensation peculiar to myself has hitherto been that of sudden, violent, unlooked-for change. When I have thought myself falling into the abyss, I have been caught up again; when I have thought myself on the threshold of a happy eternity, I have been thrust down to hell. The rough and the smooth of such a lot, taken together, should perhaps have taught me never to despair; but, through an unhappy propensity in my nature to forebode the worst, they have on the contrary operated as an admonition to me never to hope. A firm persuasion that I can never durably enjoy a comfortable state of mind, but must be depressed in proportion as I have been elevated, withers my joys in the bud, and, in a manner, entombs them before they are born: for I have no expectation but of sad vicissitude, and ever believe that the last shock of all will be fatal.

Mr. Bean has still some trouble with his parishioners. The suppression of five public-houses is the occasion.* He called on me yesterday morning

* The late Rev. H. Colbourne Ridley, the excellent vicar of Hambleden, near Henley-on-Thames, distinguished for his parochial plans and general devotedness to his professional duties, once observed that the fruit of all his labours, during

for advice; though, discreet as he is himself, he has little need of such counsel as I can give him. ——, who is subtle as a dozen foxes, met him on Sunday, exactly at his descent from the pulpit, and proposed to him a general meeting of the parish in vestry on the subject. Mr. Bean, attacked so suddenly, consented, but afterward repented that he had done so, assured as he was that he should be out-voted. There seemed no remedy but to apprise them beforehand that he would meet them indeed, but not with a view to have the question decided by a majority: that he would take that opportunity to make his allegations against each of the houses in question, which if they could refute, well; if not, they could no longer reasonably oppose his measures. This was what he came to submit to my opinion. I could do no less than approve it; and he left me with a purpose to declare his mind to them immediately.

I beg that you will give my affectionate respects to Mr. Bacon, and assure him of my sincere desire that he should think himself perfectly at liberty respecting the mottoes, to choose one or to reject both, as likes him best. I wish also to be remembered with much affection to Mrs. Cowper, and always rejoice to hear of her well-being.

Believe me, as I truly am, my dear friend, most affectionately yours,

W. C.

a residence of five-and-twenty years, was destroyed in one single year by the introduction of beer-houses, and their demoralizing effects.

TO SAMUEL ROSE, ESQ.

Weston, Sept. 11, 1788.

My dear Friend—Since your departure I have twice visited the oak, and with an intention to push my inquiries a mile beyond it, where it seems I should have found another oak, much larger and much more respectable than the former; but once I was hindered by the rain, and once by the sultriness of the day. This latter oak has been known by the name of Judith many ages, and is said to have been an oak at the time of the Conquest.* If I have not an opportunity to reach it before your arrival here, we will attempt that exploit together, and, even if I should have been able to visit it ere you come, I

* This celebrated oak, which is situated in Yardley Chase, near Lord Northampton's residence at Castle Ashby, has furnished the muse of Cowper with an occasion for displaying all the graces of his rich poetical fancy. The poem will be inserted in a subsequent part of the work. In the mean time, we extract the following lines from "The Task," to show how the descriptive powers of Cowper were awakened by this favourite and inspiring subject.

..... "The oak
Thrives by the rude concussion of the storm:
He seems indeed indignant, and to feel
The impression of the blast with proud disdain,
Frowning, as if in his unconscious arm
He held the thunder; but the monarch owes
His firm stability to what he scorns,
More fixed below, the more disturb'd above.

The Sofa.

shall yet be glad to do so, for the pleasure of extraordinary sights, like all other pleasures, is doubled by the participation of a friend.

You wish for a copy of my little dog's eulogium, which I will therefore transcribe, but by so doing I shall leave myself but scanty room for prose.

I shall be sorry if our neighbours at the Hall should have left it, when we have the pleasure of seeing you. I want you to see them soon again, that a little *consuetudo* may wear off restraint; and you may be able to improve the advantage you have already gained in that quarter. I pitied you for the fears which deprived you of your uncle's company, and the more having suffered so much by those fears myself. Fight against that vicious fear, for such it is, as strenuously as you can. It is the worst enemy that can attack a man destined to the forum—it ruined me. To associate as much as possible with the most respectable company, for good sense and good breeding, is, I believe, the only, at least I am sure it is the best remedy. The society of men of pleasure will not cure it, but rather leaves us more exposed to its influence in company of better persons.

Now for the "Dog and the Water Lily."*

W. C.

* This has already been inserted.

TO MRS. KING.*

Weston Lodge, Sept. 25, 1788.

My dearest Madam—How surprised was I this moment to meet a servant at the gate, who told me that he came from you! He could not have been more welcome unless he had announced yourself. I am charmed with your kindness and with all your elegant presents; so is Mrs. Unwin, who begs me in particular to thank you warmly for the housewife, the very thing she had just begun to want. In the fire-screen you have sent me an enigma which at present I have not the ingenuity to expound; but some muse will help me, or I shall meet with somebody able to instruct me. In all that I have seen besides, for that I have not yet seen, I admire both the taste and the execution. A toothpick case I had; but one so large, that no modern waistcoat pocket could possibly contain it. It was some years since the Dean of Durham's, for whose sake I valued it, though to me useless. Yours is come opportunely to supply the deficiency, and shall be my constant companion to its last thread. The cakes and apples we will eat, remembering who sent them, and when I say this, I will add also, that when we have neither apples nor cakes to eat, we will still remember you.—What the MS. poem can be, that you suppose to have been written by me, I am not able to guess; and since you will not allow that I have

* Private Correspondence.

guessed your person well, am become shy of exercising conjecture on any meaner subject. Perhaps they may be some mortuary verses, which I wrote last year, at the request of a certain parish-clerk. If not, and you have never seen them, I will send you them hereafter.

You have been at Bedford. Bedford is but twelve miles from Weston. When you are at home we are but eighteen miles asunder. Is it possible that such a paltry interval can separate us always? I will never believe it. Our house is going to be filled by a cousin of mine and her train, who will, I hope spend the winter with us. I cannot, therefore, repeat my invitation at present, but expect me to be very troublesome on that theme next summer. I could almost scold you for not making Weston in your way home from Bedford. Though I am neither a relation, nor quite eighty-six years of age,* believe me, I should as much rejoice to see you and Mr. King, as if I were both.

I send you, my dear madam, the poem I promised you, and shall be glad to send you any thing and every thing I write, as fast as it flows. Behold my two volumes! which, though your old acquaintance, I thought, might receive an additional recommendation in the shape of a present from myself.

What I have written I know not, for all has been scribbled in haste. I will not tempt your servant's honesty, who seems by his countenance to have a

* Mrs. Battison, a relative of Mrs. King's, and at this advanced age, was in a very declining state of health.

great deal, being equally watchful to preserve uncorrupted the honesty of my own.

I am, my dearest madam, with a thousand thanks for this stroke of friendship, which I feel at my heart, and with Mrs. Unwin's very best respects, most sincerely yours,

W. C.

P. S. My two hares died little more than two years since, one of them aged ten years, the other eleven years and eleven months.*

Our compliments attend Mr. King.

TO SAMUEL ROSE, ESQ.

Weston, Sept. 25, 1788.

My dear Friend—

Say what is the thing by my riddle design'd,
Which you carried to London, and yet left behind.

I expect your answer, and without a fee.—The half hour next before breakfast I devote to you. The moment Mrs. Unwin arrives in the study, be what I have written much or little, I shall make my bow, and take leave. If you live to be a judge, as, if I augur right, you will, I shall expect to hear of a walking circuit.

I was shocked at what you tell me of:—superior

* There is a little memoir of Cowper's hares, written by himself, which will be inserted in his works.

talents, it seems, give no security for propriety of conduct; on the contrary, having a natural tendency to nourish pride, they often betray the possessor into such mistakes as men more moderately gifted never commit. Ability therefore is not wisdom, and an ounce of grace is a better guard against gross absurdity than the brightest talents in the world.

I rejoice that you are prepared for transcript work: here will be plenty for you. The day on which you shall receive this, I beg you will remember to drink one glass at least to the success of the Iliad, which I finished the day before yesterday, and yesterday began the Odyssey. It will be some time before I shall perceive myself travelling in another road; the objects around me are at present so much the same; Olympus, and a council of gods, meet me at my first entrance. To tell you the truth, I am weary of heroes and deities, and, with reverence be it spoken, shall be glad for variety's sake, to exchange their company for that of a Cyclops.

Weston has not been without its tragedies since you left us; Mrs. Throckmorton's piping bullfinch has been eaten by a rat, and the villain left nothing but poor Bully's beak behind him. It will be a wonder if this event does not at some convenient time employ my versifying passion. Did ever fair lady, from the Lesbia of Catullus to the present day, lose her bird, and find no poet to commemorate the loss?

W. C.

Cowper here gives an amusing account of the manner in which he employed his hours of recreation, at different periods of his life.

TO MRS. KING.*

Weston Lodge, Oct. 11, 1788.

My dear Madam—You are perfectly secure from all danger of being overwhelmed with presents from me. It is not much that a poet can possibly have it in his power to give. When he has presented his own works, he may be supposed to have exhausted all means of donation. They are his only superfluity. There was a time, but that time was before I commenced writer for the press, when I amused myself in a way somewhat similar to yours; allowing, I mean, for the difference between masculine and female operations. The scissars and the needle are your chief implements; mine were the chissel and the saw. In those days you might have been in some danger of too plentiful a return for your favours. Tables, such as they were, and joint-stools, such as never were, might have travelled to Perten-hall in most inconvenient abundance. But I have long since discontinued this practice, and many others which I found it necessary to adopt, that I might escape the worst of all evils, both in itself and in its consequences—an idle life. Many arts I have exercised with this view, for which nature never designed me; though among them were some in which I arrived at considerable proficiency,

* Private Correspondence.

by mere dint of the most heroic perseverance. There is not a 'squire in all this country who can boast of having made better squirrel-houses, hutches for rabbits, or bird-cages, than myself; and in the article of cabbage-nets, I had no superior. I even had the hardiness to take in hand the pencil, and studied a whole year the art of drawing. Many figures were the fruit of my labours, which had, at least, the merit of being unparalleled by any production either of art or nature. But, before the year was ended, I had occasion to wonder at the progress that may be made, in despite of natural deficiency, by dint alone of practice; for I actually produced three landscapes, which a lady thought worthy to be framed and glazed. I then judged it high time to exchange this occupation for another, lest, by any subsequent productions of inferior merit, I should forfeit the honour I had so fortunately acquired. But gardening was, of all employments, that in which I succeeded best; though even in this I did not suddenly attain perfection. I began with lettuces and cauliflowers: from them I proceeded to cucumbers; next to melons. I then purchased an orange tree, to which, in due time, I added two or three myrtles. These served me day and night with employment during a whole severe winter. To defend them from the frost, in a situation that exposed them to its severity, cost me much ingenuity and much attendance. I contrived to give them a fire heat; and have waded night after night through the snow, with the bellows under my arm, just before going to bed, to give the

latest possible puff to the embers, lest the frost should seize them before the morning. Very minute beginnings have sometimes important consequences. From nursing two or three little evergreens, I became ambitious of a green-house, and accordingly built one; which, verse excepted, afforded me amusement for a longer time than any expedient of all the many to which I have fled for refuge from the misery of having nothing to do. When I left Olney for Weston, I could no longer have a green-house of my own; but in a neighbour's garden I find a better, of which the sole management is consigned to me.

I had need take care, when I begin a letter, that the subject with which I set off be of some importance; for before I can exhaust it, be it what it may, I have generally filled my paper. But self is a subject inexhaustible, which is the reason that though I have said little, and nothing, I am afraid, worth your hearing, I have only room to add that I am, my dear madam,

Most truly yours,

W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.*

The Lodge, Nov. 29, 1788.

My dear Friend—Not to fill my paper with apologies, I will only say that you know my occupation, and how little time it leaves me for other employments; in which, had I leisure for them, I could

* Private Correspondence.

take much pleasure. Letter-writing would be one of the most agreeable, and especially writing to you.

Poor Jenny Raban is declining fast toward the grave, and as fast aspiring to the skies. I expected to have heard yesterday of her death; but learned, on enquiry, that she was better. Dr. Kerr has seen her, and, by virtue I suppose of his prescriptions, her fits, with which she was frequently troubled, are become less frequent. But there is no reason, I believe, to look for her recovery. Her case is a consumption, into which I saw her sliding swiftly in the spring. There is not much to be lamented, or that ought to be so, in the death of those that go to glory.

If you find many blots, and my writing illegible, you must pardon them, in consideration of the cause. Lady Hesketh and Mrs. Unwin are both talking as if they designed to make themselves amends for the silence they are enjoined while I sit translating Homer. Mrs. Unwin is preparing the breakfast, and, not having seen each other since they parted to go to bed, they have consequently a deal to communicate.

I have seen Mr. Greatheed, both in his own house and here.* Prosperity sits well on him, and I cannot find that this advantageous change in his condition has made any alteration either in his views or his behaviour. The winter is gliding merrily away, while my cousin is with us. She annihi-

* Mr. Greatheed was now residing at Newport Pagnel, and exercising his ministry there.

lates the difference between cold and heat, gloomy skies and cloudless. I have written I know not what, and with the dispatch of legerdemain; but, with the utmost truth and consciousness of what I say, assure you, my dear friend, that I am

Ever yours,

W. C.

TO SAMUEL ROSE, ESQ.

Weston, Nov. 30, 1788.

My dear Friend—Your letter, accompanying the books with which you have favoured me, and for which I return you a thousand thanks, did not arrive till yesterday. I shall have great pleasure in taking now and then a peep at my old friend Vincent Bourne; the neatest of all men in his versification, though, when I was under his ushership at Westminster, the most slovenly in his person. He was so inattentive to his boys, and so indifferent whether they brought him good or bad exercises, or none at all, that he seemed determined, as he was the best, so to be the last Latin poet of the Westminster line; a plot which, I believe, he executed very successfully, for I have not heard of any who has deserved to be compared with him.

We have had hardly any rain or snow since you left us; the roads are accordingly as dry as in the middle of summer, and the opportunity of walking much more favourable. We have no season, in my mind, so pleasant as such a winter; and I account it par-

ticularly fortunate, that such it proves, my Cousin being with us. She is in good health, and cheerful, so are we all; and this I say, knowing you will be glad to hear it, for you have seen the time when this could not be said of all your friends at Weston. We shall rejoice to see you here at Christmas; but I recollect, when I hinted such an excursion by word of mouth, you gave me no great encouragement to expect you. Minds alter, and yours may be of the number of those that do so; and, if it should, you will be entirely welcome to us all. Were there no other reason for your coming than merely the pleasure it will afford to us, that reason alone would be sufficient: but, after so many toils, and with so many more in prospect, it seems essential to your well-being that you should allow yourself a respite, which perhaps you can take as comfortably (I am sure as quietly) here as any where.

The ladies beg to be remembered to you with all possible esteem and regard; they are just come down to breakfast, and, being at this moment extremely talkative, oblige me to put an end to my letter. Adieu.

W. C.

TO MRS. KING.*

The Lodge, Dec. 6, 1788.

My dear Madam—It must, if you please, be a point agreed between us, that we will not make

* Private Correspondence.

punctuality in writing the test of our regard for each other, lest we should incur the danger of pronouncing and suffering by an unjust sentence, and this mutually. I have told you, I believe, that the half hour before breakfast is my only letter-writing opportunity. In summer I rise rather early, and consequently at that season can find more time for scribbling than at present. If I enter my study now before nine, I find all at sixes and sevens; for servants will take, in part at least, the liberty claimed by their masters. That you may not suppose us all sluggards alike, it is necessary, however, that I should add a word or two on this subject, in justification of Mrs. Unwin, who, because the days are too short for the important concerns of knitting stockings and mending them, rises generally by candle-light; a practice so much in the style of all the ladies of antiquity who were good for any thing, that it is impossible not to applaud it.

Mrs. Battison being dead, I began to fear that you would have no more calls to Bedford; but the marriage, so near at hand, of the young lady you mention with a gentleman of that place, gives me hope again that you may occasionally approach us as heretofore, and that on some of those occasions you will perhaps find your way to Weston. The deaths of some and the marriages of others make a new world of it every thirty years. Within that space of time, the majority are displaced, and a new generation has succeeded. Here and there one is permitted to stay a little longer, that there may not be wanting a few grave Dons like myself, to make

the observation. This thought struck me very forcibly the other day, on reading a paper called the County Chronicle, which came hither in the package of some books from London. It contained news from Hertfordshire, and informed me, among other things, that at Great Berkhampstead, the place of my birth, there is hardly a family left of all those with whom, in my early days, I was so familiar. The houses, no doubt, remain, but the inhabitants are only to be found now by their grave-stones; and it is certain that I might pass through a town, in which I was once a sort of principal figure, unknowing and unknown. They are happy who have not taken up their rest in a world fluctuating as the sea, and passing away with the rapidity of a river. I wish to my heart that yourself and Mr. King may long continue, as you have already long continued, exceptions from the general truth of this remark. You doubtless married early, and the thirty-six years elapsed may have yet other years to succeed them. I do not forget that your relation Mrs. Battison lived to the age of eighty-six. I am glad of her longevity, because it seems to afford some assurance of yours; and I hope to know you better yet before you die.

I have never seen the Observer, but am pleased with being handsomely spoken of by an old schoolfellow. Cumberland* and I boarded together in the same house at Westminster. He was at that time clever, and I suppose has given proof sufficient

* Author of the "Observer," "the West Indian," and of several dramatic pieces.

to the world that he is still clever: but of all that he has written, it has never fallen in my way to read a syllable, except perhaps in a magazine or review the sole sources, at present, of all my intelligence Addison speaks of persons who grow dumb in the study of eloquence, and I have actually studied Homer till I am become a mere ignoramus in every other province of literature.

My letter-writing time is spent, and I must now to Homer. With my best respects to Mr. King, I remain, dear madam,

Most affectionately yours,

W. C.

P.S. When I wrote last, I told you, I believe that Lady Hesketh was with us. She is with us now, making a cheerful winter for us at Weston The acquisition of a new friend, and, at a late day the recovery of the friend of our youth, are two of the chief comforts of which this life is susceptible.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.*

The Lodge, Dec. 9, 1788.

My dear Friend—That I may return you the Latin manuscript as soon as possible,† I take a shor

* Private Correspondence.

† We have already alluded to Mr. Van Lier, a Dutch minister of the Reformed Church, to whom the perusal of Mr Newton's writings was made instrumental in leading his mind to clear and saving impressions of divine truth. He commu

opportunity to scratch a few hasty lines, that it may not arrive alone. I have made here and there an alteration, which appeared to me for the better; but, on the whole, I cannot but wonder at your adroitness in a business to which you have been probably at no time much accustomed, and which, for many years, you have not at all practised. If, when you shall have written the whole, you shall wish for a corrector of the rest, so far as my own skill in the matter goes, it is entirely at your service.

Lady Hesketh is obliged to you for the part of your letter in which she is mentioned, and returns her compliments. She loves all my friends, and consequently cannot be indifferent to you. The Throckmortons are gone into Norfolk, on a visit to Lord Petre. They will probably return this day fortnight. Mr. F—— is now preacher at Ravenstone. Mr. C—— still preaches here. The latter is warmly attended. The former has heard him, having, I suppose, a curiosity to know by what charm he held his popularity; but whether he has heard him to his own edification, or not, is more than I can say. Probably he wonders, for I have heard that he is a sensible man. His successful competitor is wise in nothing but his knowledge of the gospel.

nicated to Mr. Newton an interesting account of this spiritual change of mind, in the Latin manuscript here mentioned, which was transmitted to Cowper, and afterwards translated by him, and finally published by Mr. Newton. It is entitled "The Power of Grace illustrated," and will be more particularly adverted to in a subsequent part of this book.

I am summoned to breakfast, and am
friend, with our best love to Mrs. New
Catlett, and yourself,

Most affectionately you

I have not the assurance to call this
to your letter, in which were many things
much notice: but it is the best that, in th
moment, I am able to send you.

TO SAMUEL ROSE, ESQ.

The Lodge, Jan.

Dear Sir—I have taken since you w
many of the walks which we have taken
and none of them I believe without thoug
I have, though not a good memory in ge
a good local memory, and can recollect, b
of a tree or stile, what you said on that
spot. For this reason I purpose when th
is come, to walk with a book in my pock
I read at my fire-side I forget, but wh
under a hedge, or at the side of a pond,
and that hedge will always bring to m
brance; and this is a sort of memoria
which I would recommend to you, if I did
that you have no occasion for it.

I am reading Sir John Hawkins, and
the same opinion of his book as when

here.* There are in it undoubtedly some awkwardnesses of phrase, and which is worse, here and there, some unequivocal indications of a vanity not easily pardonable in a man of his years; but on the whole I find it amusing, and to me at least, to whom every thing that has passed in the literary world within these five-and-twenty years is new, sufficiently replete with information. Mr. Throckmorton told me about three days since, that it was lately recommended to him by a sensible man, as a book that would give him great insight into the history of modern literature, and modern men of letters, a commendation which I really think it merits. Fifty years hence, perhaps, the world will feel itself obliged to him.

W. C.

TO SAMUEL ROSE, ESQ.

The Lodge, Jan. 24, 1789.

My dear Sir—We have heard from my Cousin in Norfolk-street; she reached home safely, and in good time. An observation suggests itself, which, though I have but little time for observation making, I must allow myself time to mention. Accidents, as we call them, generally occur when there seems least reason to expect them; if a friend of ours

* Sir John Hawkins is known as the author of four quarto volumes on the general History of Music, and by a Life of Johnson. The former is now superseded by Burney's, and the latter by Boswell's.

travels far in different roads, and at an unfavourable season, we are reasonably alarmed for the safety of one in whom we take so much interest, yet how seldom do we hear a tragical account of such a journey! It is, on the contrary, at home, in our yard, or garden, perhaps in our parlour, that disaster finds us; in any place, in short, where we seem perfectly out of the reach of danger. The lesson inculcated by such a procedure on the part of Providence towards us seems to be that of perpetual dependence.

Having preached this sermon, I must hasten to a close; you know that I am not idle, nor can I afford to be so; I would gladly spend more time with you, but by some means or other this day has hitherto proved a day of hindrance and confusion.

W. C.

TO THE REV. WALTER BAGOT.

Weston, Jan. 29, 1789.

My dear Friend—I shall be a better, at least a more frequent, correspondent when I have done with Homer. I am not forgetful of any letters that I owe, and least of all forgetful of my debts in that way to you; on the contrary, I live in a continual state of self-reproach for not writing more punctually; but the old Grecian, whom I charge myself never to neglect, lest I should never finish him, has at present a voice that seems to drown all other demands, and many to which I could listen with

more pleasure than even to his *Os rotundum.* I am now in the eleventh book of the Odyssey, conversing with the dead. Invoke the muse in my behalf, that I may roll the stone of Sisyphus with some success. To do it as Homer has done it is, I suppose, in our verse and language, impossible, but I will hope not to labour altogether to as little purpose as Sisyphus himself did.

Though I meddle little with politics, and can find but little leisure to do so, the present state of things unavoidably engages a share of my attention. But, as they say, Archimedes, when Syracuse was taken, was found busied in the solution of a problem, so, come what may, I shall be found translating Homer.

Sincerely yours,

W. C.

TO MRS. KING.*

The Lodge, Jan. 29, 1789.

My dear Madam—This morning I said to Mrs. Unwin, "I must write to Mrs. King: her long silence alarms me—something has happened." These words of mine proved only a prelude to the arrival of your messenger with his most welcome charge, for which I return you my sincerest thanks. You have sent me the very things I wanted, and which I should have continued to want, had not you sent them. As often as the wine is set on the table, I have said to myself, "This is all very well; but I have no bottle-stands:" and myself as often replied,

* Private Correspondence.

"No matter; you can make shift without th
Thus I and myself have conferred together ma
day; and you, as if you had been privy to the
ference, have kindly supplied the deficiency,
put an end to the debate for ever.

When your messenger arrived I was beginnin
dress for dinner, being engaged to dine with
neighbour Mr. Throckmorton, from whose hou
am just returned, and snatch a few moments be
supper to tell you how much I am obliged to
You will not, therefore, find me very prolix at
sent; but it shall not be long before you shall
further from me. Your honest old neighbour sl
under our roof, and will be gone in the mor
before I shall have seen him.

I have more items than one by which to remen
the late frost: it has cost me the bitterest un
ness. Mrs. Unwin got a fall on the gravel-
covered with ice, which has confined her tc
upper chamber ever since. She neither broke
dislocated any bones; but received such a contu
below the hip, as crippled her completely.
now begins to recover, after having been hel
as a child for a whole fortnight, but so slowl
present, that her amendment is even now al
imperceptible.

Engaged, however, as I am with my own pri
anxieties, I yet find leisure to interest myself
a little in the distresses of the royal family, e
cially in those of the Queen.* The Lord-Chanc

* The unfortunate malady of George III. is here all
to, which first occurred, after a previous indisposition, Oc

called the other morning on Lord Stafford: entering the room, he threw his hat into a sofa at the fireside, and, clasping his hands, said, "I have heard of distress, and I have read of it; but I never saw distress equal to that of the Queen." This I know from particular and certain authority.

My dear madam, I have not time to enlarge at present on this subject, or to touch any other. Once more, therefore, thanking you for your kindness, of which I am truly sensible; and thanking, too, Mr. King for the favour he has done me in subscribing to my Homer, and at the same time begging you to make my best compliments to him, I conclude myself, with Mrs. Unwin's acknowledgments of your most acceptable present to her,

Your obliged and affectionate

W. C.

TO MRS. KING.*

March 12, 1789.

My dear Madam—I feel myself in no small degree unworthy of the kind solicitude which you ex-

22nd, 1788. The nation was plunged in grief by this calamitous event, and a regency appointed, to the exclusion of the Prince of Wales, which occasioned much discussion in parliament at that time. Happily the King's illness was only of a few months' duration: his recovery was announced to be complete, Feb. 27th, 1789. Few monarchs have been more justly venerated than George the Third, or have left behind them more unquestionable evidences of real personal piety.

* Private Correspondence.

press concerning me and my welfare, after a silence so much longer than I gave you reason to expect. I should indeed account myself inexcusable, had I not to allege, in my defence, perpetual engagements of such a kind as would by no means be dispensed with. Had Homer alone been in question, Homer should have made room for you: but I have had other work in hand at the same time, equally pressing and more laborious. Let it suffice to say, that I have not wilfully neglected you for a moment, and that you have never been out of my thoughts a day together. But I begin to perceive that, if a man will be an author, he must live neither to himself nor to his friends so much as to others, whom he never saw nor shall see.

My promise to follow my last letter with another speedily, which promise I kept so ill, is not the only one which I am conscious of having made to you, and but very indifferently performed. I promised you all the smaller pieces that I should produce, as fast as occasion called them forth, and leisure occurred to write them. Now, the fact is that I have produced several since I made that fair profession, of which I have sent you hardly any. The reason is that, transcribed into the body of a letter, they would leave me no room for prose; and that other conveyance than by the post I cannot find, even after inquiry made among all my neighbours for a traveller to Kimbolton. Well, we shall see you, I hope, in the summer; and then I will show you all. I will transcribe one for you every morning before breakfast, as long as they last; and when you come

down, you shall find it laid on your napkin. I sent one last week to London, which, by some kind body or another, I know not whom, is to be presented to the Queen. The subject, as you may guess, is the King's recovery; a theme that might make a bad poet a good one, and a good one excel himself. This, too, you shall see when we meet, unless it should bounce upon you before, from some periodical register of all such matters.

I shall commission my cousin, who lately left us, to procure for me the book you mention. Being, and having long been, so deep in the business of translation, it was natural that I should have many thoughts on that subject. I have accordingly had as many as would of themselves, perhaps, make a volume, and shall be glad to compare them with those of any writer recommended by Mr. Martyn. When you write next to that gentleman, I beg you, madam, to present my compliments to him, with thanks both for the mention of Mr. Twining's† book, and for the honour of his name among my subscribers.

I remain always, my dear Madam,

Your affectionate

W. C.

TO MRS. KING.*

The Lodge, April 22, 1789.

My dear Madam—Having waited hitherto in expectation of the messenger whom, in your last, you

† The author of the translation of Aristotle.

* Private Correspondence.

mentioned a design to send, I have at length sagaciously surmised that you delay to send him, in expectation of hearing first from me. I would that his errand hither were better worthy the journey. I shall have no very voluminous packet to charge him with when he comes. Such, however, as it is, it is ready; and has received an addition in the interim of one copy, which would not have made a part of it, had your Mercury arrived here sooner. It is on the subject of the Queen's visit to London on the night of the illuminations. Mrs. Unwin, knowing the burthen that lies on my back too heavy for any but Atlantean shoulders, has kindly performed the copyist's part, and transcribed all that I had to send you. Observe, madam, I do not write this to hasten your messenger hither, but merely to account for my own silence. It is probable that the later he arrives the more he will receive when he comes; for I never fail to write when I think I have found a favourable subject.*

* We insert these verses, as expressive of the loyal feelings of Cowper.

ON THE QUEEN'S VISIT TO LONDON,

The Night of the Tenth of March, 1789.

When, long sequester'd from his throne,
George took his seat again,
By right of worth, not blood alone,
Entitled here to reign!

Then Loyalty, with all her lamps,
New trimm'd, a gallant show,
Chasing the darkness and the damps,
Set London in a glow.

We mourn that we must give up the hope of seeing you and Mr. King at Weston. Had our correspondence commenced sooner, we had certainly found the means of meeting; but it seems that we were doomed to know each other too late for a meeting in this world. May a better world make us amends, as it certainly will, if I ever reach a better! Our interviews here are but imperfect pleasures at the best; and generally from such

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'Twas hard to tell, of streets, of squares,
Which form'd the chief display,
These most resembling cluster'd stars,
Those the long milky way.

Bright shone the roofs, the domes, the spires,
And rockets flew, self-driven,
To hang their momentary fires
Amid the vault of heaven.

So, fire with water to compare,
The ocean serves on high,
Up-spouted by a whale in air,
To express unwieldy joy.

Had all the pageants of the world
In one procession join'd,
And all the banners been unfurl'd
That heralds e'er design'd,

For no such sight had England's Queen,
Forsaken her retreat,
Where George recover'd made a scene
Sweet always, doubly sweet.

Yet glad she came that night to prove,
A witness undescried,
How much the object of her love
Was lov'd by all beside.

as promise us most gratification we receive the most disappointment. But disappointment is, I suppose, confined to the planet on which we dwell; the only one in the universe, probably, that is inhabited by sinners.

I did not know, or even suspect, that when I received your last messenger, I received so eminent a disciple of Hippocrates; a physician of such absolute controul over disease and the human consti-

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Darkness the skies had mantled o'er
In aid of her design—
Darkness, O Queen! ne'er call'd before
To veil a deed of thine!

On borrow'd wheels away she flies,
Resolv'd to be unknown,
And gratify no curious eyes
That night, except her own.

Arriv'd, a night like noon she sees,
And hears the million hum;
As all by instinct, like the bees,
Had known their sov'reign come.

Pleas'd she beheld aloft portray'd,
On many a splendid wall,
Emblems of health and heav'nly aid,
And George the theme of all.

Unlike the ænigmatic line,
So difficult to spell,
Which shook Belshazzar at his wine,
The night his city fell.

Soon watery grew her eyes, and dim,
But with a joyful tear!
None else, except in prayer for him,
George ever drew from her.

ion, as to be able to put a pestilence into his ket, confine it there, and to let it loose at his asure. We are much indebted to him that he not give us here a stroke of his ability.

I must not forget to mention that I have re-ved (probably not without your privity) Mr. ming's valuable volume.* For a long time I pposed it to have come from my bookseller, who

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It was a scene in every part
Like that in fable feign'd,
And seem'd by some magician's art
Created and sustain'd.

But other magic there she knew
Had been exerted none,
To raise such wonders in her view,
Save love of George alone!

That cordial thought her spirit cheer'd,
And, through the cumb'rous throng,
Not else unworthy to be fear'd,
Convey'd her calm along.

So, ancient poets say, serene
The sea-maid rides the waves,
And fearless of the billowy scene,
Her peaceful bosom laves.

With more than astronomic eyes
She view'd the sparkling show;
One Georgian star adorns the skies,
She myriads found below.

Yet let the glories of a night
Like that, once seen, suffice!
Heav'n grant us no such future sight
Such precious woe the price!

* The translation of Aristotle.

now and then sends me a new publication; but I find, on inquiry, that it came not from him. I beg, madam, if you are aware that Mr. Twining himself sent it, or your friend Mr. Martyn, that you will negociate for me on the occasion, and contrive to convey to the obliging donor my very warmest thanks. I am impatient till he receives them. I have not yet had time to do justice to a writer so sensible, elegant, and entertaining, by a complete perusal of his work; but I have with pleasure sought out all those passages to which Mr. Martyn was so good as to refer me, and am delighted to observe the exact agreement in opinion on the subject of translation in general, and on that of Mr. Pope's in particular, that subsists between Mr. Twining and myself. With Mrs. Unwin's best compliments, I remain, my dear madam, your obliged and affectionate

W. C.

TO MRS. KING.*

April 30, 1789.

My dear Madam—I thought to have sent you, by the return of your messenger, a letter; at least, something like one: but instead of sleeping here, as I supposed he would, he purposes to pass the night at Lavendon, a village three miles off. This design of his is but just made known to me, and it is now near seven in the evening. Therefore, lest he should be obliged to feel out his way, in an unknown country, in the dark, I am forced to scribble

* Private Correspondence.

a hasty word or two, instead of devoting, as I intended, the whole evening to your service.

A thousand thanks for your basket, and all the good things that it contained; particularly for my brother's Poems,* whose hand-writing struck me the moment I saw it. They gave me some feelings of a melancholy kind, but not painful. I will return them to you by the next opportunity. I wish that mine, which I send you, may prove half as pleasant to you as your excellent cakes and apples have proved to us. You will then think yourself sufficiently recompensed for your obliging present. If a crab-stock can transform a pippin into a nonpareil, what may not I effect in a translation of Homer? Alas! I fear, nothing half so valuable.

I have learned, at length, that I am indebted for Twining's Aristotle to a relation of mine, General Cowper.

Pardon me that I quit you so soon. It is not willingly; but I have compassion on your poor messenger.

Adieu, my dear Madam, and believe me

Affectionately yours,

W. C.

* See letter to Lady Hesketh, August 9, 1788, where Cowper states that most of his brother's early productions, as well as his own, were lost, at the period that he left the Temple.

TO SAMUEL ROSE, ESQ.

The Lodge, May 20, 1789.

My dear Sir—Finding myself between twelve and one, at the end of the seventeenth book of the Odyssey, I give the interval between the present moment and the time of walking, to you. If I write letters before I sit down to Homer, I feel my spirits too flat for poetry, and too flat for letter-writing if I address myself to Homer first; but the last I choose as the least evil, because my friends will pardon my dullness, but the public will not.

I had been some days uneasy on your account when yours arrived. We should have rejoiced to have seen you, would your engagements have permitted: but in the autumn, I hope, if not before, we shall have the pleasure to receive you. At what time we may expect Lady Hesketh, at present, I know not; but imagine that at any time after the month of June you will be sure to find her with us, which I mention, knowing that to meet you would add a relish to all the pleasures she can find at Weston.

When I wrote those lines on the Queen's visit, I thought I had performed well; but it belongs to me, as I have told you before, to dislike whatever I write when it has been written a month. The performance was therefore sinking in my esteem, when your approbation of it, arriving in good time, buoyed it up again. It will now keep possession of the place it holds in my good opinion, because it has been

favoured with yours; and a copy will certainly be at your service whenever you choose to have one.

Nothing is more certain than that when I wrote the line,

God made the country, and man made the town,

I had not the least recollection of that very similar one, which you quote from Hawkins Brown. It convinces me that critics (and none more than Warton, in his notes on Milton's minor poems) have often charged authors with borrowing what they drew from their own fund. Brown was an entertaining companion when he had drunk his bottle, but not before: this proved a snare to him, and he would sometimes drink too much; but I know not that he was chargeable with any other irregularities. He had those among his intimates, who would not have been such, had he been otherwise viciously inclined; the Duncombs, in particular, father and son, who were of unblemished morals.

W. C.

TO MRS. KING.*

The Lodge, May 30, 1789.

Dearest Madam—Many thanks for your kind and valuable dispatches, none of which, except your letter, I have yet had time to read; for true it is, and a sad truth too, that I was in bed when your messenger arrived. He waits only for my answer, for which reason I answer as speedily as I can.

* Private Correspondence.

I am glad if my poetical packet pleased you. Those stanzas on the Queen's visit were presented some time since, by Miss Goldsworthy,* to the Princess Augusta, who has probably given them to the Queen; but of their reception I have heard nothing. I gratified myself by complimenting two sovereigns whom I love and honour; and that gratification will be my reward. It would, indeed, be unreasonable to expect that persons who keep a Laureat in constant pay, should have either praise or emolument to spare for every volunteer who may choose to make them his subject.

I will take the greatest care of the papers with which you have entrusted me, and will return them by the next opportunity. It is very unfortunate that the people of Bedford should choose to have the small-pox, just at the season when it would be sure to prevent our meeting. God only knows, madam, when we shall meet, or whether at all in this world; but certain it is, that whether we meet or not,

I am most truly yours,

W. C.

TO SAMUEL ROSE, ESQ.

The Lodge, June 5, 1789.

My dear Friend—I am going to give you a deal of trouble, but London folks must be content to be troubled by country folks; for in London only can our strange necessities be supplied. You must buy

* The daughter of General Goldsworthy.

for me, if you please, a cuckoo clock; and now I will tell you where they are sold, which, Londoner as you are, it is possible you may not know. They are sold, I am informed, at more houses than one in that narrow part of Holborn which leads into Broad St. Giles'. It seems they are well-going clocks and cheap, which are the two best recommendations of any clock. They are made in Germany, and such numbers of them are annually imported, that they are become even a considerable article of commerce.

I return you many thanks for Boswell's Tour.* I read it to Mrs. Unwin after supper, and we find it amusing. There is much trash in it, as there must always be in every narrative that relates indiscriminately all that passed. But now and then the Doctor speaks like an oracle, and that makes amends for all. Sir John was a coxcomb, and Boswell is not less a coxcomb, though of another kind. I fancy Johnson made coxcombs of all his friends, and they in return made him a coxcomb; for, with reverence be it spoken, such he certainly was, and flattered as he was he was sure to be so.

Thanks for your invitation to London, but, unless London can come to me, I fear we shall never meet. I was sure that you would love my friend when you should once be well acquainted with him,† and equally sure that he would take kindly to you.

Now for Homer.

W. C.

* Tour to the Hebrides. † Rev. John Newton.

TO THE REV. WALTER BAGOT.

Weston, June 16, 1789.

My dear Friend—You will naturally suppose that the letter in which you announced your marriage occasioned me some concern, though in my answer I had the wisdom to conceal it. The account you gave me of the object of your choice was such as left me at liberty to form conjectures not very comfortable to myself, if my friendship for you were indeed sincere. I have since, however, been sufficiently consoled. Your brother Chester has informed me that you have married not only one of the most agreeable, but one of the most accomplished, women in the kingdom. It is an old maxim, that it is better to exceed expectation than to disappoint it; and with this maxim in your view it was, no doubt, that you dwelt only on circumstances of disadvantage, and would not treat me with a recital of others which abundantly overweigh them. I now congratulate not you only but myself, and truly rejoice that my friend has chosen for his fellow traveller, through the remaining stages of his journey, a companion who will do honour to his discernment, and make his way, so far as it can depend on a wife to do so, pleasant to the last.

My verses on the Queen's visit to London either have been printed, or soon will be, in the "World." The finishing to which you objected I have altered, and have substituted two new stanzas instead of it. Two others also I have struck out, another critic

having objected to *them*. I think I am a very tractable sort of a poet. Most of my fraternity would as soon shorten the noses of their children because they were said to be too long, as thus dock their compositions in compliance with the opinion of others. I beg that when my life shall be written hereafter, my authorship's ductibility of temper may not be forgotten!

I am, my dear friend,

Ever yours,

W. C.

TO SAMUEL ROSE, ESQ.

The Lodge, June 20, 1789.

Amico Mio—I am truly sorry that it must be so long before we can have an opportunity to meet. My cousin in her last letter but one inspired me with other expectations, expressing a purpose, if the matter could be so contrived, of bringing you with her: I was willing to believe that you had consulted together on the subject, and found it feasible. A month was formerly a trifle in my account, but at my present age I give it all its importance, and grudge that so many months should yet pass in which I have not even a glimpse of those I love, and of whom, the course of nature considered, I must ere long take leave for ever—but I shall live till August.

Many thanks for the cuckoo, which arrived perfectly safe and goes well, to the amusement and

amazement of all who hear it. Hannah lies awake to hear it, and I am not sure that we have not others in the house that admire his music as much as she.

Having read both Hawkins and Boswell, I now think myself as much a master of Johnson's character as if I had known him personally, and cannot but regret *that our bards of other times* found no such biographers as these. They have both been ridiculed, and the wits have had their laugh; but such a history of Milton or Shakspeare as they have given of Johnson—O how desirable!*

W. C.

TO MRS. THROCKMORTON.

July 18, 1789.

Many thanks, my dear madam, for your extract from George's letter. I retain but little Italian, yet that little was so forcibly mustered by the consciousness that I was myself the subject, that I presently became master of it. I have always said that George is a poet, and I am never in his company but I discover proofs of it, and the delicate

* The distinguishing merit of Boswell's Life of Dr. Johnson is precisely what Cowper here states. In perusing it, we become intimately acquainted with his manner, habits of life, and sentiments on every subject. We are introduced to the great wits of the age, and see a lively portraiture of the literary characters of those times. However minute and even frivolous some of the remarks may be, yet Boswell's life will never fail to awaken interest, and no library can be considered to be complete without it.

address by which he has managed his complimentary mention of me convinces me of it still more than ever. Here are a thousand poets of us who have impudence enough to write for the public; but amongst the modest men who are by diffidence restrained from such an enterprise are those who would eclipse us all. I wish that George would make the experiment, I would bind on his laurels with my own hand.*

Your gardener has gone after his wife, but, having neglected to take his lyre, *alias* fiddle, with him, has not yet brought home his Eurydice. Your clock in the hall has stopped, and (strange to tell!) it stopped at sight of the watchmaker. For he only looked at it, and it has been motionless ever since. Mr. Gregson is gone, and the Hall is a desolation. Pray don't think any place pleasant that you may find in your rambles, that we may see you the sooner. Your aviary is all in good health; I pass it every day, and often enquire at the lattice; the inhabitants of it send their duty, and wish for your return. I took notice of the inscription on your seal, and had we an artist here capable of furnishing me with another, you should read on mine—"*Encore une lettre.*"

Adieu!

W. C.

The importance of improving the early hours of

* This truly amiable and accomplished person afterwards became Sir George Throckmorton, Bart.

life, which, once lost, are never recovered, is profitably enforced in the succeeding letter.

TO SAMUEL ROSE, ESQ.

The Lodge, July 23, 1789.

You do well, my dear sir, to improve your opportunity; to speak in the rural phrase, this is your sowing time, and the sheaves you look for can never be yours unless you make that use of it. The colour of our whole life is generally such as the three or four first years in which we are our own masters make it. Then it is that we may be said to shape our own destiny, and to treasure up for ourselves a series of future successes or disappointments. Had I employed my time as wisely as you, in a situation very similar to yours, I had never been a poet perhaps, but I might by this time have acquired a character of more importance in society, and a situation in which my friends would have been better pleased to see me. But three years misspent in an attorney's office, were almost of course followed by several more equally misspent in the Temple, and the consequence has been, as the Italian epitaph says, "*Sto qui.*" The only use I can make of myself now, at least the best, is to serve *in terrorem* to others, when occasion may happen to offer, that they may escape (so far as my admonitions can have any weight with them) my folly and my fate. When you feel yourself tempted to relax a little of the strictness of your present discipline, and to indulge

in amusement incompatible with your future interests, think on your friend at Weston.

Having said this, I shall next, with my whole heart, invite you hither, and assure you that I look forward to approaching August with great pleasure, because it promises me your company. After a little time (which we shall wish longer) spent with us, you will return invigorated to your studies, and pursue them with the more advantage. In the mean time you have lost little, in point of season, by being confined to London. Incessant rains and meadows under water have given to the summer the air of winter, and the country has been deprived of half its beauties.

It is time to tell you that we are all well, and often make you our subject. This is the third meeting that my cousin and we have had in this country, and a great instance of good fortune I account it in such a world as this to have expected such a pleasure thrice without being once disappointed. Add to this wonder as soon as you can by making yourself of the party.

W. C.

TO MRS. KING.*

August 1, 1789.

My dear Madam—The post brings me no letters that do not grumble at my silence. Had not you,

* Private Correspondence.

therefore, taken me to task as roundly as others, I should have concluded you perhaps more indifferent to my epistles than the rest of my correspondents; of whom one says—"I shall be glad when you have finished Homer; then possibly you will find a little leisure for an old friend." Another says—"I don't choose to be neglected, unless you equally neglect every one else." Thus, I hear of it with both ears, and shall, till I appear in the shape of two great quarto volumes, the composition of which, I confess, engrosses me to a degree that gives my friends, to whom I feel myself much obliged for their anxiety to hear from me, but too much reason to complain. Johnson told Mr. Martyn the truth, but your inference from that truth is not altogether so just as most of your conclusions are. Instead of finding myself the more at leisure because my long labour draws to a close I find myself the more occupied. As when a horse approaches the goal, he does not, unless he be jaded, slacken his pace, but quickens it: even so it fares with me. The end is in view; I seem almost to have reached the mark, and the nearness of it inspires me with fresh alacrity. But, be it known to you, that I have still two books of the Odyssey before me, and when they are finished, shall have almost the whole eight-and-forty to revise. Judge, then, my dear madam, if it is yet time for me to play or to gratify myself with scribbling to those I love. No.: it is still necessary that waking I should be all absorbed in Homer, and that sleeping I should dream of nothing else.

I am a great lover of good paintings, but no con-

noisseur, having never had an opportunity to become one. In the last forty years of my life, I have hardly seen six pictures that were worth looking at; for I was never a frequenter of auctions, having never had any spare money in my pocket, and the public exhibitions of them in London had hardly taken place when I left it. My cousin, who is with us, saw the gentleman whose pieces you mention, on the top of a scaffold, copying a famous picture in the Vatican. She has seen some of his performances and much admires them.

You have had a great loss, and a loss that admits of no consolation, except such as will naturally suggest itself to *you*, such, I mean, as the Scripture furnishes. We must all leave, or be left; and it is the circumstance of all others that makes long life the least desirable, that others go while we stay, till at last we find ourselves alone, like a tree on a hill-top.

Accept, my dear madam, mine and Mrs. Unwin's best compliments to yourself and Mr. King, and believe me, however unfrequent in telling you that I am so,

Affectionately yours,

W. C.

TO SAMUEL ROSE, ESQ.

Weston, August 8, 1789.

My dear Friend—Come when you will, or when you can, you cannot come at a wrong time, but we shall expect you on the day mentioned.

If you have any book that you think will mak pleasant evening reading, bring it with you. I nov read Mrs. Piozzi's * Travels to the ladies after sup per, and shall probably have finished them befor we shall have the pleasure of seeing you. It is th fashion, I understand, to condemn them. But we who make books ourselves, are more merciful t book-makers. I would that every fastidious judg of authors were himself obliged to write: ther goes more to the composition of a volume than man critics imagine.† I have often wondered that th same poet who wrote the "Dunciad," should hav written these lines,

> The mercy I to others show,
> That mercy show to me.

Alas! for Pope, if the mercy he showed to others was the measure of mercy he received! he was th less pardonable too, because experienced in all th difficulties of composition.

I scratch this between dinner and tea; a time

* Formerly Mrs. Thrale, the well-known friend of Dr Johnson, and resident at Streatham. Her second marriag was considered to be imprudent. She wrote Anecdotes of Dr Johnson, and was also the authoress of the beautiful tale entitled, "The Three Warnings," beginning,

> "The tree of deepest root is found
> Unwilling most to leave the ground," &c. &c.

† It cost Lord Lyttelton twenty years to write the Life and History of Henry II. The historian Gibbon was twelve years in completing his "Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire," and Adam Smith occupied ten years in producing his "Wealth of Nations."

when I cannot write much without disordering my noddle and bringing a flush into my face. You will excuse me therefore, if, through respect for the two important considerations of health and beauty, I conclude myself,

Ever yours,

W. C.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.*

August 12, 1789.

My dear Friend—I rejoice that you and Mrs. Hill are so agreeably occupied in your retreat.† August, I hope, will make us amends for the gloom of its many wintry predecessors. We are now gathering from our meadows, not hay, but muck; such stuff as deserves not the carriage, which yet it must have, that the after-crop may have leave to grow. The Ouse has hardly deigned to run in his channel since the summer began.

My Muse were a vixen if she were not always ready to fly in obedience to your commands. But what can be done? I can write nothing in the few hours that remain to me of this day that will be fit for your purpose, and unless I could dispatch what I write by to-morrow's post, it would not reach you in time. I must add, too, that my friend, the vicar of the next parish,‡ engaged me, the day before

* Private Correspondence.

† At Wargrave, near Henley-on-Thames.

‡ Olney.

yesterday, to furnish him by next Sunday with a hymn, to be sung on the occasion of his preaching to the children of the Sunday-school: † of which hymn I have not yet produced a syllable. I am somewhat in the case of lawyer Dowling, in "Tom Jones;" and, could I split myself into as many poets as there are muses, could find employment for them all.

Adieu, my dear friend,
I am ever yours,
W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.*

August 16, 1789.

My dear Friend—Mrs. Newton and you are both kind and just in believing that I do not love you

† We subjoin an extract from this Sunday-school hymn, for the benefit of our younger readers.

"Hear, Lord, the song of praise and pray'r,
In heaven, thy dwelling-place,
From infants, made the public care,
And taught to seek thy face!

Thanks for thy word, and for thy day,
And grant us, we implore,
Never to waste in sinful play
Thy holy Sabbaths more.

Thanks that we hear—but, oh! impart
To each desires sincere,
That we may listen with our heart,
And learn, as well as hear.

* Private Correspondence.

less when I am long silent. Perhaps a friend of mine, who wishes me to have him always in my thoughts, is never so effectually possessed of the accomplishment of that wish as when I have been long his debtor; for *then* I think of him not only every day, but day and night, and all day long. But I confess at the same time that my thoughts of you will be more pleasant to myself when I shall have exonerated my conscience by giving you the letter so long your due. Therefore, here it comes: little worth your having, but payment, such as it is, that you have a right to expect, and that is essential to my own tranquillity.

That the Iliad and the Odyssey should have proved the occasion of my suspending my correspondence with you, is a proof how little we foresee the consequences of what we publish. Homer, I dare say, hardly at all suspected that at the fag-end of time two personages would appear, the one ycleped Sir Newton and the other Sir Cowper, who, loving each other heartily, would nevertheless suffer the pains of an interrupted intercourse, his poems the cause. So, however, it has happened; and though it would not, I suppose, extort from the old bard a single sigh, if he knew it, yet to me it suggests the serious reflection above-mentioned. *An author by profession had need narrowly to watch his pen, lest a line should escape it which by possibility may do mischief, when he has been long dead and buried.* What we have done, when we have written a book, will never be known till the day of judgment: then the account will be liquidated, and all

the good that it has occasioned, and all the evil, will witness either for or against us.

I am now in the last book of the Odyssey, yet have still, I suppose, half a year's work before me. The accurate revisal of two such voluminous poems can hardly cost me less. I rejoice, however, that the goal is in prospect; for, though it has cost me years to run this race, it is only now that I begin to have a glimpse of it. That I shall never receive any proportionable pecuniary recompence for my long labours is pretty certain; and as to any fame that I may possibly gain by it, *that* is a commodity that daily sinks in value, in measure as the consummation of all things approaches. In the day when the lion shall dandle the kid, and a little child shall lead them, the world will have lost all relish for the fabulous legends of antiquity, and Homer and his translator may budge off the stage together.

Ever yours,

W. C.

Cowper's remarks on the subject of authors, in the above letter, are truly impressive and demand attention. If it indeed be true, that authors are responsible for their writings, as well as for their personal conduct, (of which, we presume, there can be no reasonable doubt,) how would the tone of literature be raised, and the pen often be arrested in its course, if this conviction were fully realized to the conscience! Their writings are, in fact, the record of the operations of their minds, and are destined to survive, so far as metallic types and li-

terary talent can insure durability and success. Nor is it less true that the character of a nation will generally be moulded by the spirit of its authors. Allowing, therefore, the extent of this powerful influence, we can conceive the possibility of authors, at the last great day, undergoing the ordeal of a solemn judicial inquiry, when the subject for investigation will be, how far their writings have enlarged the bounds of useful knowledge, or subserved the cause of piety and truth. If, instead of those great ends being answered, it shall appear that the foundations of religion have been undermined, the cause of virtue weakened, and the heart made more accessible to error; if, too, a dread array of witnesses shall stand forth, tracing the guilt of their lives and the ruin of their hopes to the fatal influence of the books which they had read, what image of horror can equal the sensation of such a moment, save the despair of hearing the irrevocable sentence, "Depart from me, ye workers of iniquity; I never knew you!"

TO SAMUEL ROSE, ESQ.

Weston, Sept. 24, 1789.

My dear Friend—You left us exactly at the wrong time: had you stayed till now, you would have had the pleasure of hearing even my cousin say—"I am cold,"—and the still greater pleasure of being warm yourself; for I have had a fire in the study ever since you went. It is the fault of our summers

that they are hardly ever warm or cold enough. Were they warmer we should not want a fire, and were they colder we should have one.

I have twice seen and conversed with Mr. J——; he is witty, intelligent, and agreeable beyond the common measure of men who are so. But it is the constant effect of a spirit of party to make those hateful to each other who are truly amiable in themselves.

Beau sends his love; he was melancholy the whole day after your departure.

W. C.

The power of poetry to embellish the most simple incident is pleasingly evinced in the following letter, by the Homeric muse of Cowper.

TO SAMUEL ROSE, ESQ.

Weston, Oct. 4, 1789.

My dear Friend—The hamper is come, and come safe; and the contents I can affirm, on my own knowledge, are excellent. It chanced that another hamper and a box came by the same conveyance, all which I unpacked and expounded in the hall, my cousin sitting meantime on the stairs, spectatress of the business. We diverted ourselves with imagining the manner in which Homer would have described the scene. Detailed in his circumstantial way, it would have furnished materials for a paragraph of considerable length in an Odyssey.

The straw-stuff'd hamper with his ruthless steel
He open'd, cutting sheer th' inserted cords,
Which bound the lid and lip secure. Forth came
The rustling package first, bright straw of wheat,
Or oats, or barley; next a bottle green
Throat-full, clear spirits the contents, distill'd
Drop after drop odorous, by the art
Of the fair mother of his friend—the Rose.

And so on.

I should rejoice to be the hero of such a tale in the hands of Homer.

You will remember, I trust, that, when the state of your health or spirits calls for rural walks and fresh air, you have always a retreat at Weston.

We are all well; all love you, down to the very dog; and shall be glad to hear that you have exchanged languor for alacrity, and the debility that you mention for indefatigable vigour.

Mr. Throckmorton has made me a handsome present; Villoison's edition of the Iliad, elegantly bound by Edwards.* If I live long enough, by the contributions of my friends I shall once more be possessed of a library.

Adieu!

W. C.

TO THE REV. WALTER BAGOT.

My dear Walter—I know that you are too reasonable a man to expect any thing like punctuality of

* The character of this work is given by Cowper himself in a subsequent letter to his friend Walter Bagot.

correspondence from a translator of Homer, especially from one who is a doer also of many other things at the same time; for I labour hard not only to acquire a little fame for myself, but to win it also for others, men of whom I know nothing, not even their names, who send me their poetry, that by translating it out of prose into verse, I may make it more like poetry than it was. Having heard all this, you will feel yourself not only inclined to pardon my long silence, but to pity me also for the cause of it. You may if you please believe likewise, for it is true, that I have a faculty of remembering my friends even when I do not write to them, and of loving them not one jot the less, though I leave them to starve for want of a letter from me. And now I think you have an apology both as to style, matter, and manner, altogether unexceptionable.

Why is the winter like a backbiter? Because Solomon says that a backbiter separates between chief friends, and so does the winter; to this dirty season it is owing that I see nothing of the valuable Chesters, whom indeed I see less at all times than serves at all to content me. I hear of them indeed occasionally from my neighbours at the Hall, but even of that comfort I have lately enjoyed less than usual, Mr. Throckmorton having been hindered by his first fit of the gout from his usual visits to Chicheley. The gout however has not prevented his making me a handsome present of a folio edition of the Iliad, published about a year since at Venice, by a literato, who calls himself Villoison. It is possible that you have seen it, and that if you have it not

yourself, it has at least found its way to Lord Bagot's library. If neither should be the case, when I write next (for sooner or later I shall certainly write to you again if I live) I will send you some pretty stories out of his Prolegomena, which will make your hair stand on end, as mine has stood on end already, they so horribly affect, in point of authenticity, the credit of the works of the immortal Homer.

Wishing you and Mrs. Bagot all the happiness that a new year can possibly bring with it, I remain, with Mrs. Unwin's best respects, yours, my dear friend, with all sincerity,

W. C.

My paper mourns for the death of Lord Cowper, my valuable cousin, and much my benefactor.

TO THE REV. WALTER BAGOT.

My dear Friend—I am a terrible creature for not writing sooner, but the old excuse must serve; at least I will not occupy paper with the addition of others unless you should insist on it, in which case I can assure you that I have them ready. Now to business.

From Villoison I learn that it was the avowed opinion and persuasion of Callimachus (whose hymns we both studied at Westminster) that Homer was very imperfectly understood even in *his* day; that his admirers, deceived by the perspicuity of his style, fancied themselves masters of his meaning, when in truth they knew little about it.

Now we know that Callimachus, as I have hinted,

was himself a poet, and a good one; he was also esteemed a good critic; he almost, if not actually, adored Homer, and imitated him as nearly as he could.

What shall we say to this? I will tell you what I say to it. Callimachus meant, and he could mean nothing more by this assertion, than that the poems of Homer were in fact an allegory; that under the obvious import of his stories lay concealed a mystic sense, sometimes philosophical, sometimes religious, sometimes moral; and that the generality either wanted penetration or industry, or had not been properly qualified by their studies to discover it. This I can readily believe, for I am myself an ignoramus in these points, and, except here and there, discern nothing more than the letter. But if Callimachus will tell me that even of *that* I am ignorant, I hope soon by two great volumes to convince him of the contrary.

I learn also from the same Villoison, that Pisistratus, who was a sort of Mecænas in Athens, where he gave great encouragement to literature, and built and furnished a public library, regretting that there was no complete copy of Homer's works in the world, resolved to make one. For this purpose, he advertised rewards in all the newspapers to those, who, being possessed *memoriter* of any part or parcel of the poems of that bard, would resort to his house, and repeat them to his secretaries, that they might write them. Now, it happened that more were desirous of the reward than qualified to deserve it. The consequence was, that the non-qualified persons, having many of them a pretty knack at versi-

fication, imposed on the generous Athenian most egregiously, giving him, instead of Homer's verses, which they had not to give, verses of their own invention. He, good creature, suspecting no such fraud, took them all for gospel, and entered them into his volume accordingly.

Now, let *him* believe the story who can. That Homer's works were in this manner corrected, I *can* believe; but, that a learned Athenian could be so imposed upon, with sufficient means of detection at hand, I *cannot*. Would he not be on his guard? Would not a difference of style and manner have occurred? Would not that difference have excited a suspicion? Would not that suspicion have led to inquiry, and would not that inquiry have issued in detection? For how easy was it in the multitude of Homer-conners to find two, ten, twenty, possessed of the questionable passage, and, by confronting him with the impudent impostor, to convict him. *Abeas ergo in malam rem cum istis tuis hallucinationibus, Villoisone!* *

Yours, W. C.

* The reveries of learned men are amusing, but injurious to true taste and sound literature. Bishop Warburton's laboured attempt to prove that the descent of Æneas into hell, in the 6th book of the Æneid, is intended to convey a representation of the Eleusinian mysteries, is of this description; when it is obviously an imitation of a similar event, recorded of Ulysses. Genius should guard against a fondness for speculative discursion, which often leads from the simplicity of truth to the establishment of dangerous errors. We consider speculative inquiries to form one of the features of the present times, against which we have need to be vigilantly on our guard.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.*

Weston, Dec. 1, 1789.

My dear Friend—On this fine first of December, under an unclouded sky, and in a room full of sunshine, I address myself to the payment of a debt long in arrear, but never forgotten by me, however I may have seemed to forget it. I will not waste time in apologies. I have but one, and that one will suggest itself unmentioned. I will only add, that you are the first to whom I write, of several to whom I have not written many months, who all have claims upon me; and who, I flatter myself, are all grumbling at my silence. In your case, perhaps, I have been less anxious than in the case of some others; because, if you have not heard from myself, you have heard from Mrs. Unwin. From her you have learned that I live, that I am as well as usual, and that I translate Homer:—three short items, but in which is comprised the whole detail of my present history. Thus I fared when you were here; thus I have fared ever since you were here; and thus, if it please God, I shall continue to fare for some time longer: for, though the work is done, it is not finished: a riddle which you, who are a brother of the press, will solve easily.† I have also been the less anxious, because I have had frequent opportunities to hear of you; and have always heard that

* Private Correspondence.

† Revision is no small part of the literary labours of an author.

you are in good health and happy. Of Mrs. Newton, too, I have heard more favourable accounts of late, which have given us both the sincerest pleasure. Mrs. Unwin's case is, at present, my only subject of uneasiness, that is not immediately personal, and properly my own. She has almost constant headaches; almost a constant pain in her side, which nobody understands; and her lameness, within the last half year, is very little amended. But her spirits are good, because supported by comforts which depend not on the state of the body; and I do not know that, with all these pains, her looks are at all altered since we had the happiness to see you here, unless, perhaps, they are altered a little for the better. I have thus given you as circumstantial an account of ourselves as I could; the most interesting matter, I verily believe, with which I could have filled my paper, unless I could have made spiritual mercies to myself the subject. In my next, perhaps, I shall find leisure to bestow a few lines on what is doing in France, and in the Austrian Netherlands;* though, to say the truth, I am much better qualified to write an essay on the siege of Troy than to descant on any of these modern revolutions. I question if, in either of the countries just mentioned, full of bustle and tumult as they are, there be a single

* The French revolution, that great event which exercised so powerful an influence not only on European governments but on the world at large, and the effects of which are experienced at the present moment, had just commenced. The Austrian Netherlands had also revolted, and Brussels and most of the principal towns and cities were in the hands of the insurgents.

character whom Homer, were he living, would deign to make his hero. The populace are the heroes now, and the stuff of which gentlemen heroes are made seems to be all expended.

I will endeavour that my next letter shall not follow this so tardily as this has followed the last; and, with our joint affectionate remembrances to yourself and Mrs. Newton, remain as ever,

Sincerely yours,

W. C.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

Weston, Dec. 18, 1789.

My dear Friend—The present appears to me a wonderful period in the history of mankind. That nations so long contentedly slaves should on a sudden become enamoured of liberty, and understand as suddenly their own natural right to it, feeling themselves at the same time inspired with resolution to assert it, seems difficult to account for from natural causes. With respect to the final issue of all this, I can only say that if, having discovered the value of liberty, they should next discover the value of peace, and lastly the value of the word of God, they will be happier than they ever were since the rebellion of the first pair, and as happy as it is possible they should be in the present life.

Most sincerely yours,

W. C.

The French Revolution, to which we have now been led by the correspondence of Cowper, whether we consider its immediate or ultimate consequences, was one of the most extraordinary events recorded in the history of modern Europe. It fixed the contemplation of the politician, the philosopher, and the moralist. By the first, it was viewed according to the political bias which marks the two great divisions of party established in this country. Mr. Fox designated it as one of the noblest fabrics ever erected by human liberty for the happiness of mankind. Mr. Burke asserted that it was a system of demolition, and not of reparation. The French Revolution might possibly have merited the eulogium of Mr. Fox, if its promoters had known when to pause, or how to regulate its progress. But unhappily the spirit of democracy was let loose, and those who first engaged in the work (influenced no doubt by the purest motives) were obliged to give way to men of more turbulent passions; demagogues, who were willing to go all lengths; who had nothing to lose and every thing to gain; and in whose eyes moderation was a crime, and the fear of spoliation and carnage an act of ignoble timidity. Contending factions succeeded each other like the waves of the sea, and were borne along with the same irresistible power, till their fury was spent and exhausted.

The sequel is well known. Property was confiscated. Whatever was venerable in virtue, splendid in rank, or sacred in religion, became the object of popular violence. The throne and the altar were

overturned; and an amiable and inoffensive monarch, whose only crime was the title that he sustained, was led in triumph to the scaffold, amidst the acclamations of his people; and, as if to make death more terrible, the place selected for his execution was in view of the very palace which had been the scene of his former greatness.*

The features which distinguish the Revolution in France from that of England in 1688 are thus finely drawn by Mr. Burke.

"In truth, the circumstances of our Revolution (as it is called) and that of France are just the reverse of each other in almost every particular, and in the whole spirit of the transaction. With us it was the case of a legal monarch attempting arbitrary power. In France it is the case of an arbitrary monarch, beginning, from whatever cause, to legalize his authority. The one was to be resisted, the other was to be managed and directed; but in neither case was the order of the state to be changed, lest government might be ruined, which ought only to be corrected and legalized.

"What we did was, in truth and substance, and in a constitutional light, *a revolution, not made, but prevented.* We took solid securities; we settled doubtful questions; we corrected anomalies in our law. In the stable, fundamental parts of our constitution

* Hæc finis Priami fatorum; hic exitus illum
Sorte tulit, Trojam incensam et prolapsa videntem
Pergama; tot quondam populis, terrisque, superbum
Regnatorem Asiæ. Jacet ingens littore truncus,
Avulsumque humeris caput, et sine nomine corpus.

we made no revolution; no, nor any alteration at all. We did not impair the monarchy.

"The nation kept the same ranks, the same orders, the same privileges, the same franchises, the same rules for property, the same subordinations, the same order in the law, in the revenue, and in the magistracy; the same lords, the same commons, the same corporations, the same electors."*

That we should have been so graciously preserved in such a period of political convulsions, will ever demand our gratitude and praise. We owe it not to our arms, or to our councils, but to the goodness and mercy of God. We heard the loud echo of the thunder, and the howlings of the storm. We even felt some portion of the heavings of the earthquake; but we were spared from falling into the abyss; we survived the ruin and desolation. We trust we shall still be preserved, by the same superintending Providence, and that we may say in the language of Burke,—

"We are not the converts of Rousseau; we are not the disciples of Voltaire; Helvetius has made no progress amongst us. Atheists are not our preachers; madmen are not our lawgivers."

But, if history be philosophy teaching by example, what we may ask were the political and moral causes of that extraordinary convulsion in France, of which we are speaking? They are to be traced to that spirit of ambition and conquest, which, however splendid in military prowess, ultimately exhausted the resources of the state, and oppressed

* Burke's Reflections on the Revolution in France.

the people with imposts and taxation. They are to be found in the system of peculation and extravagance that pervaded every department of the government; in the profligacy of the court; in the luxurious pomp and pride of the noblesse; and in the universal corruption that infected the whole mass of society. To the above may be added the zeal with which infidel principles were propagated, and the systematic attempts to undermine the whole fabric of civil society, through the agency of the press. The press became impious toward God, and disloyal toward kings; and unfortunately the Church and the State, being enfeebled by corruption, opposed an ineffectual resistance. Religion had lost its hold on the public mind. Men were required to believe too much, and believed nothing. The consequences were inevitable. When men have once cast off the fear of God, it is an easy transition to forget reverence to the authority of kings, and obedience to the majesty of law. It is curious to observe how the effects of this antisocial conspiracy were distinctly foreseen and predicted. "*I hold it impossible*, said Rousseau, "*that the great monarchies of Europe can subsist much longer.*" "*The high may be reduced low, and the rich become poor, and even the monarch dwindle into a subject.*"* The train was laid, the match alone was wanting, to produce the explosion.

The occasion was at length presented. The im-

* In his "Emile." The memorable remark of Madame de Pompadour will not soon be forgotten; "Après nous le Déluge," "After us, the Deluge."

mediate cause of the French Revolution must be sought in the plains of America. When Great Britain was involved with her American colonies, France ungraciously interposed in the quarrel. She paid the price of her interference, in a manner that she little anticipated. The Marquis de la Fayette *there* first acquired his ardour for the cause of liberty; and, crossing the Atlantic, carried back with him the spirit into France, and in a short time lighted up a flame, which has since spread so great a conflagration.

But whence sprung the Revolution in America? To solve this momentous question, we must overlook the more immediate causes, and extend our inquiry to the political and religious discussions of the times of James I. and Charles I. and II. It is in that unfortunate period of polemical controversy and excitement, that the foundation of events was laid which have not even yet spent their strength; and that the philosophical inquirer, whose sole object is the attainment of truth, will find it.

The Puritans proposed to carry forth the principle of the Reformation to a still further extent. The proposition was rejected, their views were impugned, and the freedom of religious inquiry was impeded by vexatious obstructions. They found no asylum at home; they sought it abroad, and on the American continent planted the standard of civil and religious liberty. The times of Charles I. followed. There was the same spirit, and the same results. The Star Chamber and the High Commission Court supplied new victims to swell the tide of angry

feeling beyond the Atlantic. It was persecution that first peopled America. Time alone was wanting to mature the fruits. The reign of Charles II. completed the eventful crisis. The Act of Uniformity excluded, in one day, two thousand ministers, (many of whom were distinguished for profound piety and learning) from the bosom of the Church of England; and thus, by the acts of three successive reigns, the spirit of independence was established in America, and dissent in England, from which such mighty results have since followed.

We have indulged in these remarks, because we wish to show the tendency of that high feeling, which originating, as we sincerely believe, in a cordial attachment to our Church, endangers, by mistaking the means, the stability of the edifice which it seeks to support. We think this feeling, though abated in its intenseness, still exists; and, cast as we now are into perilous times, when Churches and States are undergoing a most scrutinizing inquiry, we are deeply solicitous that the past should operate as a beacon for the future. If the Church of England is to be preserved as a component part of our institutions, and in its ascendancy over the public mind, the members of that Church must not too incautiously resist the spirit of the age, but seek to guide what they cannot arrest. Let the value and necessity of an Established Church be recognized by the evidence of its usefulness; let the pure doctrines of the Gospel be proclaimed in our pulpits; and a noble ardour and co-operation be manifested in the pro-

sperity of our great Institutions,—our Bible, Missionary, and Jewish societies. She will then attract the favour, the love, and the veneration of the poor, and diffuse a holy and purifying influence among all classes in the community. Her priests will thus be clothed with righteousness, and her saints shout for joy. To her worshippers we may then exclaim, with humble confidence and joy, "Walk about Zion, and go round about her; tell the towers thereof. Mark ye well her bulwarks, consider her palaces, that ye may tell it to the generation following. For this God is our God for ever and ever; he will be our guide even unto death." *

We now resume the Correspondence of Cowper.

TO SAMUEL ROSE, ESQ.

The Lodge, Jan. 3, 1790.

My dear Sir—I have been long silent, but you have had the charity, I hope and believe, not to ascribe my silence to a wrong cause. The truth is, I have been too busy to write to any body, having been obliged to give my early mornings to the revisal and correction of a little volume of Hymns for Children, written by I know not whom. This task I finished but yesterday, and while it was in hand wrote only to my Cousin, and to her rarely. From her, however, I knew that you would hear of my

* Psalm xlviii. 12—14.

well being, which made me less anxious about m debts to you than I could have been otherwise.

I am almost the only person at Weston known t you who have enjoyed tolerable health this winte In your next letter give us some account of you own state of health, for I have had many anxietie about you. The winter has been mild; but ou winters are in general such, that, when a frien leaves us in the beginning of that season, I alway feel in my heart a *perhaps*, importing that we hav possibly met for the last time, and that the robi may whistle on the grave of one of us before th return of summer.

I am still thrumming Homer's lyre; that is t say, I am still employed in my last revisal; and, t give you some idea of the intenseness of my toils, will inform you that it cost me all the mornin yesterday, and all the evening, to translate a sing simile to my mind. The transitions from one men ber of the subject to another, though easy and natur in the Greek, turn out often so intolerably awkwar in an English version, that almost endless labou and no little address are requisite to give the grace and elegance. I forget if I told you that you German Clavis has been of considerable use to m I am indebted to it for a right understanding of th manner in which Achilles prepared pork, mutto and goat's flesh, for the entertainment of his friend in the night when they came deputed by Agamem non to negociate a reconciliation. A passage which nobody in the world is perfectly master, my self only, and Slaukenbergius excepted, nor eve was, except when Greek was a *live* language.

I do not know whether my Cousin has told you or not how I brag in my letters to her concerning my Translation; perhaps her modesty feels more for me than mine for myself, and she would blush to let even you know the degree of my self-conceit on that subject. I will tell you, however, expressing myself as decently as my vanity will permit, that it has undergone such a change for the better in this last revisal, that I have much warmer hopes of success than formerly.

Yours,

W. C.

TO MRS. KING.*

The Lodge, Jan. 4, 1790.

My dear Madam—Your long silence has occasioned me to have a thousand anxious thoughts about you. So long it has been, that, whether I now write to a Mrs. King at present on earth, or already in heaven, I know not. I have friends whose silence troubles me less, though I have known them longer; because, if I hear not from themselves, I yet hear from others that they are still living, and likely to live. But if your letters cease to bring me news of your welfare, from whom can I gain the desirable intelligence? The birds of the air will not bring it, and third person there is none between us by whom it might be conveyed. Nothing is plain to me on this subject, but that either you are dead, or very much indisposed; or, which would affect me with perhaps as deep a concern, though of a different

* Private Correspondence.

kind, very much offended. The latter of these suppositions I think the least probable, conscious as I am of an habitual desire to offend nobody, especially a lady, and especially a lady to whom I have many obligations. But all the three solutions above mentioned are very uncomfortable; and if you live, and can send me one that will cause me less pain than either of them, I conjure you, by the charity and benevolence which I know influence you upon all occasions, to communicate it without delay.

It is possible, notwithstanding appearances to the contrary, that you are not become perfectly indifferent to me, and to what concerns me. I will therefore add a word or two on a subject which once interested you, and which is, for that reason, worthy to be mentioned, though truly for no other—meaning myself. I am well, and have been so, (uneasiness on your account excepted,) both in mind and body, ever since I wrote to you last. I have still the same employment. Homer in the morning, and Homer in the evening, as constant as the day goes round. In the spring I hope to send the Iliad and Odyssey to the press. So much for me and my occupations. Poor Mrs. Unwin has hitherto had but an unpleasant winter; unpleasant as constant pain, either in the head or side, could make it. She joins me in affectionate compliments to yourself and Mr. King, and in earnest wishes that you will soon favour me with a line that shall relieve me from all my perplexities,

I am, dear Madam,
Sincerely yours,
W. C.

TO MRS. KING.*

The Lodge, Jan. 18, 1790.

My dear Madam—The sincerest thanks attend you, both from Mrs. Unwin and myself, for many good things, on some of which I have already regaled with an affectionate remembrance of the giver.

The report that informed you of inquiries made by Mrs. Unwin after a house at Huntingdon was unfounded. We have no thought of quitting Weston, unless the same Providence that led us hither should lead us away. It is a situation perfectly agreeable to us both; and to me in particular, who write much and walk much, and consequently love silence and retirement, one of the most eligible. If it has a fault, it is that it seems to threaten us with a certainty of never seeing you. But may we not hope that, when a milder season shall have improved your health, we may yet, notwithstanding the distance, be favoured with Mr. King's and your company? A better season will likewise improve the roads, and, exactly in proportion as it does so, will, in effect, lessen the interval between us. I know not if Mr. Martyn be a mathematician, but most probably he is a good one, and he can tell you that this is a proposition mathematically true, though rather paradoxical in appearance.

I am obliged to that gentleman, and *much* obliged to him for his favourable opinion of my translation. What parts of Homer are particularly intended by

* Private Correspondence.

the critics as those in which I shall probably fa short, I know not; but let me fail where I may, shall fail no where through want of endeavours t avoid it. The under parts of the poems (those mean which are merely narrative) I find the mo difficult. These can only be supported by the di tion, and on these, for that reason, I have bestowe the most abundant labour. Fine similes and fir speeches take care of themselves; but the exa process of slaying a sheep, and dressing it, it is n so easy to dignify in our language, and in our me sure. But I shall have the comfort, as I said, t reflect, that, whatever may be hereafter laid to m charge, the sin of idleness will not. Justly, at leas it never will. In the mean time, my dear madan I whisper to you a secret;—not to fall short of th original in every thing is impossible.

I send you, I believe, all my pieces that you hav never seen. Did I not send you "Catharina?" not, you shall have it hereafter. I am, dear madan ever, ever in haste,

Sincerely yours,

W. C.

We are here first introduced to the notice of th Rev. John Johnson, the cousin of Cowper, by th maternal line of the Donnes. The poet often use familiarly to call him "Johnny of Norfolk." Hi name will frequently appear in the course of th ensuing Correspondence. It is to his watchful an affectionate care that the poet was indebted for a the solace that the most disinterested regard, an

highly conscientious sense of duty, could administer, under circumstances the most afflicting. Nor did he ever leave his beloved bard, till he had closed his eyes in death, and paid the last sad offices, due to departed worth and genius. His acquaintance with Cowper commenced about this time, by a voluntary introduction, on his own part. He has recorded the particulars of this first interview and visit in a poem, entitled "Recollections of Cowper." We trust that his estimable widow may see fit to communicate it to the public, who we have no doubt will feel a lively interest in a subject, issuing from the kinsman of Cowper.

TO LADY HESKETH.

The Lodge, Jan. 22, 1790.

My dear Coz.—I had a letter yesterday from the wild boy Johnson, for whom I have conceived a great affection. It was just such a letter as I like, of the true helter-skelter kind; and, though he writes a remarkably good hand, scribbled with such rapidity that it was barely legible. He gave me a droll account of the adventures of Lord Howard's note, and of his own in pursuit of it. The poem he brought me came as from Lord Howard, with his Lordship's request that I would revise it. It is in the form of a pastoral, and is entitled "The Tale of the Lute, or the Beauties of Audley End." I read it attentively, was much pleased with part of it, and part of it I equally disliked. I told him so, and in such terms as one naturally uses when

there seems to be no occasion to qualify or to a viate censure. I observed him afterwards sor what more thoughtful and silent, but occasion as pleasant as usual; and in Kilwick-wood, wh we walked the next day, the truth came ou that he was himself the author, and that L Howard not approving it altogether, and seve friends of his own age, to whom he had shown differing from his Lordship in opinion, and bei highly pleased with it, he had come at last t resolution to abide by my judgment; a measure which Lord Howard by all means advised him. accordingly brought it, and will bring it again the summer, when we shall lay our heads togetl and try to mend it.

I have lately had a letter also from Mrs. Ki to whom I had written to inquire whether were living or dead: she tells me the critics exp from my Homer every thing in some parts, a that in others I shall fall short. These are Cambridge critics; and she has her intelliger from the botanical professor, Martyn. That g tleman in reply answers them, that I shall fall sh in nothing, but shall disappoint them all. It sh be my endeavour to do so, and I am not with hope of succeeding.

W. C.

TO SAMUEL ROSE, ESQ.

The Lodge, Feb. 2, 1790.

My dear Friend—Should Heyne's* Homer appear before mine, which I hope is not probable, and should he adopt in it the opinion of Bentley, that the whole of the last Odyssey is spurious, I will dare to contradict both him and the Doctor. I am only in part of Bentley's mind (if indeed his mind were such) in this matter, and, giant as he was in learning, and eagle-eyed in criticism, am persuaded, convinced, and sure (can I be more positive?) that, except from the moment when the Ithacans began to meditate an attack on the cottage of Laertes, and thence to the end, that book is the work of Homer. From the moment aforesaid, I yield the point, or rather have never, since I had any skill in Homer, felt myself at all inclined to dispute it. But I believe perfectly at the same time that, Homer himself alone excepted, the Greek poet never existed, who could have written the speeches made by the shade of Agamemnon, in which there is more insight into the human heart discovered, than I ever saw in any other work, unless in Shakspeare's. I am equally disposed to fight for the whole passage that describes Laertes, and the interview between him and Ulysses. Let Bentley grant these to Homer, and I will shake hands with him as to all the rest. The battle with

* A German critic, well known for his classical taste, and especially for his comments on Virgil.

which the book concludes is, I think, a paltry battle, and there is a huddle in the management of it altogether unworthy of my favourite, and the favourite of all ages.

If you should happen to fall into company with Dr. Warton † again, you will not, I dare say, forget to make him my respectful compliments, and to assure him that I felt myself not a little flattered by the favourable mention he was pleased to make of me and my labours. The poet who pleases a man like him has nothing left to wish for. I am glad that you were pleased with my young cousin Johnson; he is a boy, and bashful, but has great merit in respect both of character and intellect. So far at least as in a week's knowledge of him I could possibly learn, he is very amiable and very sensible, and inspired me with a warm wish to know him better.

W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.*

The Lodge, Feb. 5, 1790.

My dear Friend—Your kind letter deserved a speedier answer, but you know my excuse, which were I to repeat always, my letters would resemble the fag-end of a newspaper, where we always find the price of stocks, detailed with little or no variation.

† Distinguished for his History of English Poetry," &c. &c.

* Private Correspondence.

When January returns, you have your feelings concerning me, and such as prove the faithfulness of your friendship.* I have mine also concerning myself, but they are of a cast different from yours. Yours have a mixture of sympathy and tender solicitude, which makes them, perhaps, not altogether unpleasant. Mine, on the contrary, are of an unmixed nature, and consist simply, and merely, of the most alarming apprehensions. Twice has that month returned upon me, accompanied by such horrors as I have no reason to suppose ever made part of the experience of any other man. I accordingly look forward to it, and meet it, with a dread not to be imagined. I number the nights as they pass, and in the morning bless myself that another night is gone, and no harm has happened. This may argue, perhaps, some imbecility of mind, and no small degree of it; but it is natural, I believe, and so natural as to be necessary and unavoidable. I know that God is not governed by secondary causes, in any of his operations, and that, on the contrary, they are all so many agents in his hand, which strike only when he bids them. I know consequently that one month is as dangerous to me as another, and that, in the middle of summer, at noon-day, and in the clear sunshine, I am in reality, unless guarded by him, as much exposed as when fast asleep at midnight, and in mid-winter. But we are not always the wiser for our knowledge,

* January was a season of the year, when the nervous depression under which Cowper laboured was generally the most severe.

and I can no more avail myself of mine, than if it were in the head of another man, and not in my own. I have heard of bodily aches and ails, that have been particularly troublesome when the season returned in which the hurt that occasioned them was received. The mind, I believe, (with my own, however, I am sure it is so,) is liable to similar periodical affection. But February is come, my terror is passed, and some shades of the gloom that attended his presence have passed with him. I look forward with a little cheerfulness to the buds and the leaves that will soon appear, and say to myself, till they turn yellow I will make myself easy. The year will go round, and January will approach. I shall tremble again, and I know it; but in the mean time I will be as comfortable as I can. Thus, in respect to peace of mind, such as it is that I enjoy, I subsist, as the poor are vulgarly said to do, from hand to mouth; and, of a Christian, such as you once knew me, am, by a strange transformation, become an Epicurean philosopher, bearing this motto on my mind,—*Quid sit futurum cras, fuge quærere.*

I have run on in a strain that the beginning of your letter suggested to me, with such impetuosity, that I have not left myself opportunity to write more by the present post; and, being unwilling that you should wait longer for what will be worth nothing when you get it, will only express the great pleasure we feel on hearing, as we did lately from Mr. Bull, that Mrs. Newton is so much better.

Truly yours,

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

The Lodge, Feb. 9, 1790.

I have sent you lately scraps instead of letters, having had occasion to answer immediately on the receipt, which always happens while I am *deep in Homer.*

I knew when I recommended Johnson to you, that you would find some way to serve him, and so it has happened; for, notwithstanding your own apprehensions to the contrary, you have already procured him a chaplainship :* this is pretty well, considering that it is an early day, and that you have but just begun to know that there is such a man under heaven. I had rather myself be patronised by a person of small interest, with a heart like yours, than by the Chancellor himself, if he did not care a farthing for me.

If I did not desire you to make my acknowledgments to Anonymous, as I believe I did not, it was because I am not aware that I am warranted to do so. But the omission is of less consequence, because, whoever he is, though he has no objection to doing the kindest things, he seems to have an aversion to the thanks they merit.

You must know that two odes composed by Horace have been lately discovered at Rome; I wanted them transcribed into the blank leaves of a little Horace of mine, and Mrs. Throckmorton per-

* The poet's kinsman was made chaplain to Dr. Spencer Madan, the Bishop of Peterborough.

formed that service for me; in a blank leaf, therefore, of the same book, I wrote the following.

TO MRS. THROCKMORTON,

On her beautiful Transcript of Horace's Ode,

AD LIBRUM SUUM.

Maria, could Horace have guess'd
What honours awaited his ode,
To his own little volume address'd,
The honour which you have bestow'd,
Who have trac'd it in characters here,
So elegant, even, and neat;
He had laugh'd at the critical sneer,
Which he seems to have trembled to meet.

And sneer, if you please, he had said,
Hereafter a nymph shall arise,
Who shall give me, when you are all dead,
The glory your malice denies,
Shall dignity give to my lay,
Although but a mere bagatelle;
And even a poet shall say,
Nothing ever was written so well.

TO LADY HESKETH.

The Lodge, Feb. 26, 1790.

You have set my heart at ease, my Cousin, so far as you were yourself the object of its anxieties. What other troubles it feels can be cured by God alone. But you are never silent a week longer than usual, without giving an opportunity to my imagination (ever fruitful in flowers of a sable hue) to

tease me with them day and night. London is indeed a pestilent place, as you call it; and I would, with all my heart, that thou hadst less to do with it: were you under the same roof with me, I should know you to be safe, and should never distress you with melancholy letters.

I feel myself well enough inclined to the measure you propose, and will show to your new acquaintance, with all my heart, a sample of my translation, but it shall not be, if you please, taken from the Odyssey. It is a poem of a gentler character than the Iliad, and, as I propose to carry her by a *coup de main*, I shall employ Achilles, Agamemnon, and the two armies of Greece and Troy in my service. I will accordingly send you in the box that I received from you last night the two first books of the Iliad for that lady's perusal; to those I have given a third revisal; for them therefore I will be answerable, and am not afraid to stake the credit of my work upon *them* with her, or with any living wight, especially one who understands the original. I do not mean that even they are finished, for I shall examine and cross-examine them yet again, and so you may tell her, but I know that they will not disgrace me; whereas, it is so long since I have looked at the Odyssey that I know nothing at all about it. They shall set sail from Olney on Monday morning in the diligence, and will reach you, I hope, in the evening. As soon as she has done with them I shall be glad to have them again, for the time draws near when I shall want to give them the last touch.

I am delighted with Mrs. Bodham's * kindn
giving me the only picture of my mother tha
be found, I suppose, in all the world. I had
possess it than the richest jewel in the British
for I loved her with an affection that her
fifty-two years since, has not in the least abat
remember her too, young as I was when she
well enough to know that it is a very exact r
blance of her, and as such it is to me inva
Every body loved her, and, with an amiable
racter so impressed upon all her features, ever
was sure to do so.

I have a very affectionate and a very clever
from Johnson, who promises me the transc
the books entrusted to him in a few days.
a great love for that young man; he has some
of the same stream in his veins that once ani
the original of that dear picture.†

W

TO MRS. BODHAM.

Weston, Feb. 27,

My dearest Rose ‡—Whom I thought wi

* Mrs. Bodham was a cousin of Cowper's, connect
him by his maternal family, the Donnes.

† The manner in which Cowper speaks of his kin
uniformly the same—kind, affectionate, endearing.

‡ Mrs. Bodham was always addressed by Cowper
playful and complimentary style, though her Christi
was Ann.

and fallen from the stalk, but whom I find still alive: nothing could give me greater pleasure than to know it, and to learn it from yourself. I loved you dearly when you were a child, and love you not a jot the less for having ceased to be so. Every creature that bears any affinity to my mother is dear to me, and you, the daughter of her brother, are but one remove distant from her: I love you therefore, and love you much, both for her sake and for your own. The world could not have furnished you with a present so acceptable to me as the picture which you have so kindly sent me. I received it the night before last, and viewed it with a trepidation of nerves and spirits somewhat akin to what I should have felt, had the dear original presented herself to my embraces. I kissed it, and hung it where it is the last object that I see at night, and, of course, the first on which I open my eyes in the morning. She died when I had completed my sixth year, yet I remember her well, and am an ocular witness of the great fidelity of the copy. I remember too a multitude of the maternal tendernesses which I received from her, and which have endeared her memory to me beyond expression.* There is in me, I believe,

* No present could possibly have been more acceptable to Cowper than the receipt of his mother's picture. He composed the beautiful verses, on this occasion, so tenderly descriptive of the impression made on his youthful imagination by the remembrance of her virtues. We extract the following passage.

My mother! when I learn'd that thou wast dead,
Say, wast thou conscious of the tears I shed?

more of the Donne than of the Cowper, and though I love all of both names, and have a thousand reasons to love those of my own name, yet I feel the bond of nature draw me vehemently to your side. I was thought, in the days of my childhood, much to resemble my mother, and in my natural temper, of which at the age of fifty-eight I must be supposed a competent judge, can trace both her and my late uncle, your father. Somewhat of his irritability, and a little I would hope both of his and of her ———, I know not what to call it, without seeming to praise myself, which is not my intention,

Hover'd thy spirit o'er thy sorrowing son,
Wretch even then, life's journey just begun?
Perhaps thou gavest me, though unfelt, a kiss;
Perhaps a tear, if souls can weep in bliss—
Ah, that maternal smile! it answers—Yes.
I heard the bell toll'd on thy burial day,
I saw the hearse that bore thee slow away,
And, turning from my nursery window, drew
A long, long sigh, and wept a last adieu!
But was it such?—It was. Where thou art gone,
Adieus and farewells are a sound unknown.
May I but meet thee on that peaceful shore,
The parting word shall pass my lips no more!
Thy maidens, grieved themselves at my concern,
Oft gave me promise of thy quick return.
What ardently I wish'd, I long believ'd,
And, disappointed still, was still deceiv'd;
By expectation every day beguil'd,
Dupe of *to-morrow*, even from a child.
Thus many a sad to-morrow came and went,
Till, all my stock of infant sorrow spent,
I learn'd at last submission to my lot,
But, though I less deplored thee, ne'er forgot.

but speaking to *you*, I will even speak out, and say *good nature*. Add to all this, I deal much in poetry, as did our venerable ancestor, the Dean of St. Paul's,* and I think I shall have proved myself a Donne at all points. The truth is, that whatever I am, I love you all.

I account it a happy event that brought the dear boy, your nephew, to my knowledge, and that, breaking through all the restraints which his natural bashfulness imposed on him, he determined to find me out. He is amiable to a degree that I have seldom seen, and I often long with impatience to see him again.

My dearest Cousin, what shall I say in answer to your affectionate invitation? I *must* say this, I cannot come now, nor soon, and I wish with all my heart I could. But I will tell you what may be done, perhaps, and it will answer to us just as well: you and Mr. Bodham can come to Weston, can you not? The summer is at hand, there are roads and wheels to bring you, and you are neither of you translating Homer. I am crazed that I cannot ask you altogether for want of house-room, but for Mr. Bodham and yourself we have good room, and equally good for any third in the shape of a Donne, whether named Hewitt,† Bodham, Balls, or Johnson, or by whatever name distinguished. Mrs. Hewitt has particular claims upon me; she was my playfellow at Berkhamstead, and has a share in my warmest

* Dr. John Donne, an eminent and learned divine whose life is written by Izaac Walton. Born 1573, died 1631.

† The Rev. J. Johnson's sister.

affections. Pray tell her so! Neither do I at all forget my cousin Harriet. She and I have been many a time merry at Catfield, and have made the parsonage ring with laughter:—give my love to her. Assure yourself, my dearest Cousin, that I shall receive you as if you were my sister, and Mrs. Unwin is, for my sake, prepared to do the same. When she has seen you she will love you for your own.

I am much obliged to Mr. Bodham for his kindness to my Homer, and with my love to you all, and with Mrs. Unwin's kind respects, am,

My dear, dear Rose,

Ever yours,

W. C.

P. S.—I mourn the death of your poor brother Castres, whom I should have seen had he lived, and should have seen with the greatest pleasure. He was an amiable boy, and I was very fond of him.

Still another P. S.—I find on consulting Mrs. Unwin, that I have underrated our capabilities, and that we have not only room for you and Mr. Bodham, but for two of your sex, and even for your nephew into the bargain. We shall be happy to have it all so occupied.

Your nephew tells me that his sister, in the qualities of the mind, resembles you; that is enough to make her dear to me, and I beg you will assure her that she is so. Let it not be long before I hear from you.

TO JOHN JOHNSON, ESQ.

Weston, Feb. 28, 1790.

My dear Cousin John—I have much wished to hear from you, and, though you are welcome to write to Mrs. Unwin as often as you please, I wish myself to be numbered among your correspondents.

I shall find time to answer you, doubt it not! Be as busy as we may, we can always find time to do what is agreeable to us. By the way, had you a letter from Mrs. Unwin? I am witness that she addressed one to you before you went into Norfolk, but your mathematico-poetical head forgot to acknowledge the receipt of it.

I was never more pleased in my life than to learn, and to learn from herself, that my dearest Rose * is still alive. Had she not engaged me to love her by the sweetness of her character when a child, she would have done it effectually now by making me the most acceptable present in the world, my own dear mother's picture. I am perhaps the only person living who remembers her, but I remember her well, and can attest on my own knowledge the truth of the resemblance. Amiable and elegant as the countenance is, such exactly was her own; she was one of the tenderest parents, and so just a copy of her is therefore to me invaluable.

I wrote yesterday to my Rose, to tell her all this, and to thank her for her kindness in sending it.

* Mrs. Ann Bodham.

Neither do I forget your kindness, who intimated to her that I should be happy to possess it.

She invites me into Norfolk, but, alas! she might as well invite the house in which I dwell; for, all other considerations and impediments apart, how is it possible that a translator of Homer should lumber to such a distance! But, though I cannot comply with her kind invitation, I have made myself the best amends in my power, by inviting her and all the family of Donnes to Weston. Perhaps we could not accommodate them all at once, but in succession we could, and can at any time find room for five, three of them being females, and one a married one. You are a mathematician; tell me then how five persons can be lodged in three beds (two males and three females) and I shall have good hope that you will proceed a senior optime? It would make me happy to see our house so furnished. As to yourself, whom I know to be a *subscalarian*, or a man that sleeps under the stairs,* I should have no objection at all, neither could you possibly have any yourself to the garret, as a place in which you might be disposed of with great felicity of accommodation.

I thank you much for your services in the transcribing way, and would by no means have you despair of an opportunity to serve me in the same way yet again;—write to me soon, and tell me when I shall see you.

* This expression alludes to the situation of the rooms occupied by him at Caius College, Cambridge.

I have not said the half that I have to say, but breakfast is at hand, which always terminates my epistles.

What have you done with your poem? The trimming that it procured you here has not, I hope, put you out of conceit with it entirely; you are more than equal to the alteration that it needs. Only remember that in writing, perspicuity is always more than half the battle: the want of it is the ruin of more than half the poetry that is published. A meaning that does not stare you in the face is as bad as no meaning, because nobody will take the pains to poke for it. So now adieu for the present. Beware of killing yourself with problems, for, if you do, you will never live to be another Sir Isaac.

Mrs. Unwin's affectionate remembrances attend you; Lady Hesketh is much disposed to love you; perhaps most who know you have some little tendency the same way.

TO LADY HESKETH.

The Lodge, March 8, 1790.

My dearest Cousin—I thank thee much and oft, for negociating so well this poetical concern with Mrs. ——, and for sending me her opinion in her own hand. I should be unreasonable indeed not to be highly gratified by it, and I like it the better for being modestly expressed. It is, as you know, and

it shall be some months longer, my daily business to polish and improve what is done, that when the whole shall appear she may find her expectations answered. I am glad also that thou didst send her the sixteenth Odyssey, though, as I said before, I know not at all at present whereof it is made; but I am sure that thou wouldst not have sent it, hadst thou not conceived a good opinion of it thyself, and thought that it would do me credit. It was very kind in thee to sacrifice to this Minerva on my account.

For my sentiments on the subject of the Test Act, I cannot do better than refer thee to my poem, entitled and called "Expostulation." I have there expressed myself not much in its favour, considering it in a religious view, and in a political one, I like it not a jot the better.* I am neither Tory nor high

* The following is the passage alluded to.

Hast thou by statute shoved from its design
The Saviour's feast, his own blest bread and wine,
And made the symbols of atoning grace
An office-key, a picklock to a place?
That infidels may prove their title good,
By an oath dipp'd in sacramental blood?
A blot that will be still a blot, in spite
Of all that grave apologists may write:
And, though a bishop toil to cleanse the stain,
He wipes and scours the silver cup in vain.
And hast thou sworn on every slight pretence,
Till perjuries are common as bad pence,
While thousands, careless of the damning sin,
Kiss the book's outside, who ne'er look'd within?

Expostulation.

The Test Act is now repealed.

Churchman, but an old Whig, as my father was before me; and an enemy, consequently, to all tyrannical impositions.

Mrs. Unwin bids me return thee many thanks for thy inquiries so kindly made concerning her health. She is a little better than of late, but has been ill continually ever since last November. Every thing that could try patience and submission she has had, and her submission and patience have answered in the trial, though mine, on her account, have often failed sadly.

I have a letter from Johnson, who tells me that he has sent his transcript to you, begging at the same time more copy. Let him have it by all means; he is an industrious youth, and I love him dearly. I told him that you are disposed to love him a little. A new poem is born on the receipt of my mother's picture:—thou shalt have it.

W. C.

TO SAMUEL ROSE, ESQ.

The Lodge, March 11, 1790.

My dear Friend—I was glad to hear from you, for a line from you gives me always much pleasure, but was not much gladdened by the contents of your letter. The state of your health, which I have learned more accurately perhaps from my Cousin, except in this last instance, than from yourself, has alarmed me, and even she has collected her infor-

mation upon that subject more from your looks than from your own acknowledgments. To complain much and often of our indispositions does not always insure the pity of the hearer, perhaps sometimes forfeits it; but to dissemble them altogether, or at least to suppress the worst, is attended ultimately with an inconvenience greater still; the secret will out at last, and our friends, unprepared to receive it, are doubly distressed about us. In saying this, I squint a little at Mrs. Unwin, who will read it; it is with her, as with you, the only subject on which she practises any dissimulation at all; the consequence is that, when she is much indisposed, I never believe myself in possession of the whole truth, live in constant expectation of hearing something worse, and at the long run am seldom disappointed. It seems therefore, as on all other occasions, so even in this, the better course on the whole to appear what we are; not to lay the fears of our friends asleep by cheerful looks, which do not probably belong to us, or by letters written as if we were well, when in fact we are very much otherwise. On condition however that you act differently toward me for the future, I will pardon the past, and she may gather from my clemency shown to you some hopes, on the same conditions, of similar clemency to herself.

W. C.

TO MRS. KING.*

Weston, March 12, 1790.

My dear Madam—I live in such a nook, have so few opportunities of hearing news, and so little time to read it, that to me to begin a letter seems always a sort of forlorn hope. Can it be possible, I say to myself, that I should have any thing to communicate? These misgivings have an ill effect, so far as my punctuality is concerned, and are apt to deter me from the business of letter-writing, as from an enterprise altogether impracticable.

I will not say that you are more pleased with my trifles than they deserve, lest I should seem to call your judgment in question; but I suspect that a little partiality to the brother of my brother, enters into the opinion you form of them. No matter, however, by what you are influenced, it is for my interest that you should like them at any rate, because, such as they are, they are the only return I can make you for all your kindness. This consideration will have two effects; it will have a tendency to make me more industrious in the production of such pieces, and more attentive to the manner in which I write them. This reminds me of a piece in your possession, which I will entreat you to commit to the flames, because I am somewhat ashamed of it. To make you amends, I hereby promise to send you a new edition of it when time shall serve,

* Private Correspondence.

delivered from the passages that I dislike in the first, and in other respects amended. The piece that I mean, is one entitled—"To Lady Hesketh on her furnishing for me our house at Weston"—or, as the lawyers say, words to that amount. I have, likewise, since I sent you the last packet, been delivered of two or three other brats, and, as the year proceeds, shall probably add to the number. All that come shall be basketed in time, and conveyed to your door.

I have lately received from a female cousin of mine in Norfolk, whom I have not seen these five and thirty years, a picture of my own mother. She died when I wanted two days of being six years old; yet I remember her perfectly, find the picture a strong likeness of her, and, because her memory has been ever precious to me, have written a poem on the receipt of it: a poem which, one excepted, I had more pleasure in writing than any that I ever wrote. That one was addressed to a lady whom I expect in a few minutes to come down to breakfast, and who has supplied to me the place of my own mother—my own invaluable mother, these six and twenty years. Some sons may be said to have had many fathers, but a plurality of mothers is not common.

Adieu, my dear madam; be assured that I always think of you with much esteem and affection, and am, with mine and Mrs. Unwin's best compliments to you and yours, most unfeignedly your friend and humble servant,

W. C.

TO MRS. THROCKMORTON.

The Lodge, March 21, 1790.

My dearest Madam—I shall only observe on the subject of your absence, that you have stretched it since you went, and have made it a week longer. Weston is sadly *unked** without you; and here are two of us, who will be heartily glad to see you again. I believe you are happier at home than any where, which is a comfortable belief to your neighbours, because it affords assurance that, since you are neither likely to ramble for pleasure, nor to meet with any avocations of business, while Weston shall continue to be your home, it will not often want you.

The two first books of my Iliad have been submitted to the inspection and scrutiny of a great critic of your sex, at the instance of my Cousin, as you may suppose. The lady is mistress of more tongues than a few; (it is to be hoped she is single); and particularly she is mistress of the Greek.† She returned them with expressions, that, if any thing could make a poet prouder than all poets naturally are, would have made me so. I tell you this, because I know that you all interest yourselves in the success of the said Iliad.

My periwig is arrived, and is the very perfection of all periwigs, having only one fault; which is, that

* A common provincialism in Buckinghamshire, probably a corruption of *uncouth*.

† Mrs. Carter.

my head will only go into the first half of it, the other half, or the upper part of it, continuing still unoccupied. My artist in this way at Olney has however undertaken to make the whole of it tenantable, and then I shall be twenty years younger than you have ever seen me.

I heard of your birth-day very early in the morning; the news came from the steeple.

W. C.

The following letter is interesting as recording his opinion of the style best adapted to a translation of Homer.

TO LADY HESKETH.

The Lodge, March 22, 1790.

I rejoice, my dearest Cousin, that my MSS. have roamed the earth so successfully, and have met with no disaster. The single book excepted, that went to the bottom of the Thames, and rose again, they have been fortunate without exception. I am not superstitious, but have nevertheless as good a right to believe that adventure an omen, and a favourable one, as Swift had to interpret as he did the loss of a fine fish, which he had no sooner laid on the bank than it flounced into the water again. This, he tells us himself, he always considered as a type of his future disappointments; and why may not I as well consider the marvellous recovery of my lost book from the bottom of the Thames, as typical of its future prosperity? To say the truth, I have no fears now about the success of my trans-

lation, though in time past I have had many. I knew there was a style somewhere, could I but find it, in which Homer ought to be rendered, and which alone would suit him. Long time I blundered about it, ere I could attain to any decided judgment on the matter; at first, I was betrayed by a desire of accommodating my language to the simplicity of his into much of the quaintness that belonged to our writers of the fifteenth century. In the course of many revisals I have delivered myself from this evil, I believe, entirely; but I have done it slowly, and as a man separates himself from his mistress when he is going to marry. I had so strong a predilection in favour of this style at first, that I was crazed to find that others were not as much enamoured with it as myself. At every passage of that sort which I obliterated, I groaned bitterly, and said to myself, I am spoiling my work to please those who have no taste for the simple graces of antiquity. But, in measure as I adopted a more modern phraseology, I became a convert to their opinion, and, in the last revisal, which I am now making, am not sensible of having spared a single expression of the obsolete kind. I see my work so much improved by this alteration, that I am filled with wonder at my own backwardness to assent to the necessity of it, and the more when I consider that Milton, with whose manner I account myself intimately acquainted, is never quaint, never twangs through the nose, but is every where grand and elegant, without resorting to musty antiquity for his beauties. On the contrary, he took a long stride

forward, left the language of his own day far behind him, and anticipated the expressions of a century yet to come.

I have now, as I said, no longer any doubt of the event, but I will give thee a shilling if thou wilt tell me what I shall say in my Preface. It is an affair of much delicacy, and I have as many opinions about it as there are whims in a weather-cock.

Send my MSS. and thine when thou wilt. In a day or two I shall enter on the last Iliad; when I have finished it I shall give the Odyssey one more reading, and shall therefore shortly have occasion for the copy in thy possession, but you see that there is no need to hurry.

I leave the little space for Mrs. Unwin's use, who means, I believe, to occupy it,

And am evermore thine most truly,

W. C.

Postscript, in the hand of Mrs. Unwin.

You cannot imagine how much your ladyship would oblige your unworthy servant, if you would be so good to let me know in what point I differ from you. All that at present I can say is, that I will readily sacrifice my own opinion, unless I can give you a substantial reason for adhering to it.

TO JOHN JOHNSON, ESQ.

Weston, March 23, 1790.

Your MSS. arrived safe in New Norfolk-street,

and I am much obliged to you for your labours. Were you now at Weston, I could furnish you with employment for some weeks, and shall perhaps be equally able to do it in summer, for I have lost my best amanuensis in this place, Mr. George Throckmorton, who is gone to Bath.

You are a man to be envied, who have never read the Odyssey, which is one of the most amusing story-books in the world. There is also much of the finest poetry in the world to be found in it, notwithstanding all that Longinus has insinuated to the contrary.* His comparison of the Iliad and Odyssey to the meridian and to the declining sun is pretty, but, I am persuaded, not just. The prettiness of it seduced him; he was otherwise too judicious a reader of Homer to have made it. I can find in the latter no symptoms of impaired ability, none of the effects of age; on the contrary, it seems to me a certainty, that Homer, had he written the Odyssey in his youth, could not have written it better; and if the Iliad in his old age, that he would have written it just as well. A critic would tell me that, instead of *written*, I should have said *composed*. Very likely—but I am not writing to one of that snarling generation.

My boy, I long to see thee again. It has happened some way or other, that Mrs. Unwin and I have conceived a great affection for thee. That I should is the less to be wondered at, (because thou

* Longinus compares the Odyssey to the setting sun, and the Iliad, as more characteristic of the loftiness of Homer's genius, to the splendour of the rising sun.

art a shred of my own mother;) neither is the wonder great, that she should fall into the same predicament: for she loves every thing that I love. You will observe that your own personal right to be beloved makes no part of the consideration. There is nothing that I touch with so much tenderness as the vanity of a young man; because, I know how extremely susceptible he is of impressions that might hurt him in that particular part of his composition. If you should ever prove a coxcomb,* from which character you stand just now at a greater distance than any young man I know, it shall never be said that I have made you one; no, you will gain nothing by me but the honour of being much valued by a poor poet, who can do you no good while he lives, and has nothing to leave you when he dies. If you can be contented to be dear to me on these conditions, so you shall; but other terms more advantageous than these, or more inviting, none have I to propose.

Farewell. Puzzle not yourself about a subject when you write to either of us, every thing is subject enough from those we love.

W. C.

TO JOHN JOHNSON, ESQ.

Weston, April 17, 1790.

Your letter, that now lies before me, is almost

* No man ever possessed a happier exemption, throughout life, from such a title.

three weeks old, and therefore of full age to receive an answer, which it shall have without delay, if the interval between the present moment and that of breakfast should prove sufficient for the purpose.

Yours to Mrs. Unwin was received yesterday, for which she will thank you in due time. I have also seen, and have now in my desk, your letter to Lady Hesketh; she sent it thinking that it would divert me; in which she was not mistaken. I shall tell her when I write to her next, that you long to receive a line from her. Give yourself no trouble on the subject of the politic device you saw good to recur to, when you presented me with your manuscript;* it was an innocent deception, at least it could harm nobody save yourself; an effect which it did not fail to produce; and, since the punishment followed it so closely, by me at least, it may very well be forgiven. You ask, how I can tell that you are not addicted to practices of the deceptive kind? And certainly, if the little time that I have had to study you were alone to be considered, the question would not be unreasonable; but in general a man who reaches my years finds

> "That long experience does attain
> To something like prophetic strain."

I am very much of Lavater's opinion, and persuaded that faces are as legible as books, only with these circumstances to recommend them to our

* The poem on Audley End, alluded to in a former letter to Lady Hesketh.

perusal, that they are read in much less time, and are much less likely to deceive us. Yours gave me a favourable impression of you the moment I beheld it, and, though I shall not tell you in particular what I saw in it, for reasons mentioned in my last, I will add, that I have observed in you nothing since that has not confirmed the opinion I then formed in your favour. In fact, I cannot recollect that my skill in physiognomy has ever deceived me, and I should add more on this subject had I room.

When you have shut up your mathematical books, you must give yourself to the study of Greek; not merely that you may be able to read Homer and the other Greek classics with ease, but the Greek Testament and the Greek fathers also. Thus qualified, and by the aid of your fiddle into the bargain, together with some portion of the grace of God (without which nothing can be done) to enable you to look well to your flock, when you shall get one, you will be set up for a parson. In which character, if I live to see you in it, I shall expect and hope that you will make a very different figure from most of your fraternity.*

Ever yours,

W. C.

* Cowper is often very sarcastic upon the clergy. We trust that these censures are not so merited in these times of reviving piety.

TO LADY HESKETH.

The Lodge, April 19, 1790.

My dearest Coz.—I thank thee for my cousin Johnson's letter, which diverted me. I had one from him lately, in which he expressed an ardent desire of a line from you, and the delight he would feel in receiving it. I know not whether you will have the charity to satisfy his longings, but mention the matter, thinking it possible that you may. A letter from a lady to a youth immersed in mathematics must be singularly pleasant.

I am finishing Homer backward, having begun at the last book, and designing to persevere in that crab-like fashion till I arrive at the first. This may remind you perhaps of a certain poet's prisoner in the Bastille (thank Heaven! in the Bastille now no more) counting the nails in the door, for variety's sake, in all directions.* I find so little to do in the last revisal, that I shall soon reach the Odyssey, and soon want those books of it which are in thy possession; but the two first of the Iliad, which are also in thy possession, much sooner; thou mayst

* We subjoin the lines to which Cowper refers:—

"To wear out time in numb'ring to and fro
The studs, that thick emboss his iron door;
Then downward and then upward, then aslant
And then alternate; with a sickly hope
By dint of change to give his tasteless task
Some relish; 'till the sum, exactly found
In all directions, he begins again."

Book v.—*Winter Morning's Walk.*

therefore send them by the first fair opportunity. am in high spirits on this subject, and think that have at last licked the clumsy cub into a shape tha will secure to it the favourable notice of the publi Let not —— retard me, and I shall hope to get out next winter.

I am glad that thou hast sent the General thos verses on my mother's picture. They will amus him—only I hope that he will not miss my mothe in-law, and think that she ought to have made third. On such an occasion it was not possible t mention her with any propriety. I rejoice at th General's recovery; may it prove a perfect one.

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

Weston, April 30, 1790.

To my old friend, Dr. Madan,* thou couldst n have spoken better than thou didst. Tell him, beseech you, that I have not forgotten him; te him also, that to my heart and home he will be a ways welcome; nor he only, but all that are hi His judgment of my translation gave me the highe satisfaction, because I know him to be a rare o Grecian.

The General's approbation of my picture vers gave me also much pleasure. I wrote them n without tears, therefore I presume it may be th they are felt by others. Should he offer me n

* The Bishop of Peterborough.

father's picture I shall gladly accept it. A melancholy pleasure is better than none, nay, verily, better than most. He had a sad task imposed on him, but no man could acquit himself of such a one with more discretion or with more tenderness. The death of the unfortunate young man reminded me of those lines in Lycidas,

> "It was that fatal and perfidious bark,
> Built in th' eclipse, and rigg'd with curses dark,
> That sunk so low that sacred head of thine!"

How beautiful!

W. C.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.*

The Lodge, May 2, 1790.

My dear Friend—I am still at the old sport—Homer all the morning, and Homer all the evening. Thus have I been held in constant employment, I know not exactly how many, but I believe these six years, an interval of eight months excepted. It is now become so familiar to me to take Homer from my shelf at a certain hour, that I shall no doubt continue to take him from my shelf at the same time, even after I have ceased to want him. That period is not far distant. I am now giving the last touches to a work, which, had I foreseen the difficulty of it, I should never have meddled with; but which, having at length nearly finished it to my mind, I shall discontinue with regret.

* Private Correspondence.

My very best compliments attend Mrs. Hill, whom I love, "unsight unseen," as they say, but yet truly.

Yours ever,

W. C.

TO MRS. THROCKMORTON.

The Lodge, May 10, 1790.

My dear Mrs. Frog*—You have by this time (I presume) heard from the Doctor, whom I desired to present to you our best affections, and to tell you that we are well. He sent an urchin, (I do not mean a hedgehog, commonly called an urchin in old times, but a boy, commonly so called at present,) expecting that he would find you at Buckland's, whither he supposed you gone on Thursday. He sent him charged with divers articles, and among others with letters, or at least with a letter: which I mention, that, if the boy should be lost, together with his dispatches, past all possibility of recovery, you may yet know that the Doctor stands acquitted of not writing. That he is utterly lost (that is to say, the boy—for, the Doctor being the last antecedent, as the grammarians say, you might otherwise suppose that he was intended) is the more probable, because he was never four miles from his home before, having only travelled at the side of a plough-team; and, when the Doctor gave him his direction to Buckland's,† he asked, very naturally,

* The sportive title generally bestowed by Cowper on his amiable friends the Throckmortons.

† The residence of the Throckmorton family in Berkshire.

if that place was in England. So, what has become of him Heaven knows!

I do not know that any adventures have presented themselves since your departure worth mentioning, except that the rabbit that infested your wilderness has been shot for devouring your carnations; and that I myself have been in some danger of being devoured in like manner by a great dog, viz. Pearson's. But I wrote him a letter on Friday, (I mean a letter to Pearson, not to his dog, which I mention to prevent mistakes—for the said last antecedent might occasion them in this place also,) informing him, that, unless he tied up his great mastiff in the day-time, I would send him a worse thing, commonly called and known by the name of an attorney. When I go forth to ramble in the fields, I do not sally (like Don Quixote) with a purpose of encountering monsters, if any such can be found; but am a peaceable, poor gentleman, and a poet, who mean nobody any harm, the fox-hunters and the two universities of this land excepted.

I cannot learn from any creature whether the Turnpike Bill is alive or dead—so ignorant am I, and by such ignoramuses surrounded. But, if I know little else, this at least I know, that I love you, and Mr. Frog; that I long for your return, and that I am, with Mrs. Unwin's best affections,

Ever yours,

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

The Lodge, May 28, 1790.

My dearest Coz.—I thank thee for the offer of thy best services on this occasion. But Heaven guard my brows from the wreath you mention, whatever wreath beside may hereafter adorn them! It would be a leaden extinguisher clapped on all the fire of my genius, and I should never more produce a line worth reading. To speak seriously, it would make me miserable, and therefore I am sure that thou, of all my friends, wouldst least wish me to wear it.*

Adieu!

Ever thine—in Homer-hurry,

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

Weston, June 3, 1790.

You will wonder, when I tell you, that I, even I, am considered by people, who live at a great distance, as having interest and influence sufficient to procure a place at court, for those who may happen to want one. I have accordingly been applied to within these few days by a Welchman, with a wife and many children, to get him made Poet Laureat

* Lady Hesketh made the offer of her services to procure the situation of Poet Laureat for Cowper, which he thus declines.

as fast as possible. If thou wouldst wish to make the world merry twice a year, thou canst not do better than procure the office for him. I will promise thee that he shall afford thee a hearty laugh in return every birth-day and every new year. He is an honest man.

Adieu!

W. C.

The poet's kinsman, having consulted him on the subject of his future plans and studies, receives the following reply. The letter is striking, but admits of doubt as to the justness of some of its sentiments.

TO JOHN JOHNSON, ESQ.

Weston, June 7, 1790.

My dear John—You know my engagements, and are consequently able to account for my silence. I will not therefore waste time and paper in mentioning them, but will only say, that, added to those with which you are acquainted, I have had other hindrances, such as business and a disorder of my spirits, to which I have been all my life subject. At present I am, thank God! perfectly well both in mind and body. Of you I am always mindful, whether I write or not, and very desirous to see you. You will remember, I hope, that you are under engagements to us, and, as soon as your Norfolk friends can spare you, will fulfil them. Give us all the time you can, and all that they can spare to us!

You never pleased me more than when you told me you had abandoned your mathematical pursuits. It grieved me to think, that you were wasting your time merely to gain a little Cambridge fame, not worth your having. I cannot be contented, that your renown should thrive nowhere but on the banks of the Cam. Conceive a nobler ambition, and never let your honour be circumscribed by the paltry dimensions of a university! It is well that you have already, as you observe, acquired sufficient information in that science to enable you to pass creditably such examinations as I suppose you must hereafter undergo. Keep what you have gotten, and be content. More is needless.*

* To Cowper's strictures on the University of Cambridge, and his remark that the fame there acquired is not worth having, we by no means subscribe. We think no youth ought to be insensible to the honourable ambition of obtaining its distinctions, and that they are not unfrequently the precursors of subsequent eminence in the Church, the Senate, and at the Bar. We have been informed that, out of fifteen judges recently on the bench, eleven had obtained honours at our two Universities. Whether the system of education is not susceptible of much improvement is a subject worthy of deep consideration. There seems to be a growing persuasion that, at the University of Cambridge, the mode of study is too exclusively mathematical; and that a more comprehensive plan, embracing the various departments of general knowledge and literature, would be an accession to the cause of learning. We admit that the University fully affords the means of acquiring this general information, but there is a penalty attached to the acquisition which operates as a prohibition, because the prospect of obtaining honours must, in that case, be renounced. By adopting a more comprehensive system,

You could not apply to a worse than I am to advise you concerning your studies. I was never a regular student myself, but lost the most valuable years of my life in an attorney's office and in the Temple. I will not therefore give myself airs, and affect to know what I know not. The affair is of great importance to you, and you should be directed in it by a wiser than I. To speak however in very general terms on the subject, it seems to me that your chief concern is with history, natural philosophy, logic, and divinity. As to metaphysics, I know little about them. But the very little that I do know has not taught me to admire them. *Life is too short to afford time even for serious trifles. Pursue what you know to be attainable, make truth your object, and your studies will make you a wise man! Let your divinity, if I may advise, be the divinity of the glorious Reformation: I mean in contradiction to Arminianism, and all the* isms *that were ever broached in this world of error and ignorance.*

the stimulants to exertion would be multiplied, and the end of education apparently more fully attained.

When we reflect on the singular character of the present times, the instability of governments, and the disorganized state of society, arising from conflicting principles and opinions, the question of education assumes a momentous interest. We are firmly persuaded that, unless the minds of youth be enlarged by useful knowledge, and fortified by right principles of religion, they will not be fitted to sustain the duties and responsibilities that must soon devolve upon them; nor will they be qualified to meet the storms that now threaten the political and moral horizon of Europe.

The divinity of the Reformation is called Calvinism, but injuriously. It has been that of the church of Christ in all ages. It is the divinity of St. Paul, and of St. Paul's master, who met him in his way to Damascus.

I have written in great haste, that I might finish, if possible, before breakfast. Adieu! Let us see you soon; the sooner the better. Give my love to the silent lady, the Rose, and all my friends around you! W. C.

There is an impressive grandeur and sublimity in the concluding part of the above letter, which entitles it to be written in characters of gold. May it be engraven on the heart of every minister! The divinity of the glorious Reformation, as illustrated in the works of Cranmer, Jewel, Latimer, and Ridley, are in fact the essential doctrines of the gospel, as distinguished from a mere system of moral ethics. It is in proportion only as these great and fundamental truths are clearly understood, and fully, freely, and faithfully declared, that religion can acquire its holy ascendancy over the heart and practice. Moral preaching may produce an external reformation, but it is the gospel alone that can change the heart. The corruption and lost state of man, the mercy of God in Christ, the necessity of a living faith in the Saviour, the office of the Holy Spirit, in his enlightening, converting, and sanctifying influences;—these are the grand themes of the Christian ministry. Whenever they are urged with the prominence that their incalculable importance

demands, and accompanied by a divine influence, signal effects will never fail to follow. The careless will be roused, the lover of pleasure become the lover of God, and the oppressed heart find pardon and peace.

TO SAMUEL ROSE, ESQ.

The Lodge, June, 8, 1790.

My dear Friend—Among the many who love and esteem you, there is none who rejoices more in your felicity than myself. Far from blaming, I commend you much for connecting yourself, young as you are, with a well chosen companion for life. Entering on the state with uncontaminated morals, you have the best possible prospect of happiness, and will be secure against a thousand and ten thousand temptations to which, at an early period of life, in such a Babylon as you must necessarily inhabit, you would otherwise have been exposed. I see it too in the light you do, as likely to be advantageous to you in your profession. Men of business have a better opinion of a candidate for employment, who is married, because he has given bond to the world, as you observe, and to himself, for diligence, industry, and attention. It is altogether therefore a subject of much congratulation; and mine, to which I add Mrs. Unwin's, is very sincere. Samson, at his marriage, proposed a riddle to the Philistines. I am no Samson, neither

are you a Philistine. Yet expound to me th
lowing if you can!

What are they, which stand at a distance each other, and meet without ever moving! †

Should you be so fortunate as to guess it may propose it to the company, when you brate your nuptials; and, if you can win changes of raiment by it, as Samson did by h me tell you, they will be no contemptible s sition to a young beginner.

You will not, I hope, forget your way to W in consequence of your marriage, where yo yours will always be welcome.

W.

TO MRS. KING.*

The Lodge, June 14, 1

My dear Madam—I have hardly a scrap of belonging to me that is not scribbled over blank verse; and, taking out your letter from s dle of others, this moment, I find it thus ins on the seal side:

—— meantime his steeds
Snorted, by Myrmidons detain'd, and loosed
From their own master's chariot, foam'd to fly.

You will easily guess to what they belong;

† This enigma is explained in a subsequent letter.
* Private Correspondence.

mention the circumstance merely in proof of my perpetual engagement to Homer whether at home or abroad; for, when I committed these lines to the back of your letter, I was rambling at a considerable distance from home. I set one foot on a mole-hill, placed my hat with the crown upward on my knee, laid your letter upon it, and with a pencil wrote the fragment that I have sent you. In the same posture I have written many and many a passage of a work which I hope soon to have done with. But all this is foreign to what I intended when I first took pen in hand. My purpose then was, to excuse my long silence as well as I could, by telling you that I am at present not only a labourer in verse, but in prose also, having been requested by a friend, to whom I could not refuse it, to translate for him a series of Latin letters received from a Dutch minister of the gospel at the Cape of Good Hope.* With this additional occupation you will be sensible that my hands are full; and it is a truth that, except to yourself, I would, just at this time, have written to nobody.

I felt a true concern for what you told me in your last respecting the ill state of health of your much-valued friend, Mr. Martyn. You say, if I knew half his worth, I should, with you, wish his longer continuance below. Now you must under-

* The Dutch minister here mentioned. was Mr. Van Lier, who recorded the remarkable account of the great spiritual change produced in his mind, by reading the works of Mr. Newton. The letters were written in Latin, and translated by Cowper, at the request of his clerical friend.

stand that, ignorant as I am of Mr. Martyn, except by your report of him, I do nevertheless sincerely wish it—and that, both for your sake and my own; nor less for the sake of the public.* For your sake, because you love and esteem him highly; for the sake of the public, because, should it please God to take him before he has completed his great botanical work, I suppose no other person will be able to finish it so well; and for my own sake, because I know he has a kind and favourable opinion beforehand of my translation, and consequently, should it justify his prejudice when it appears, he will stand my friend against an army of Cambridge critics.—It would have been strange indeed if *self* had not peeped out on this subject.—I beg you will present my best respects to him, and assure him that, were it possible he could visit Weston, I should be most happy to receive him.

Mrs. Unwin would have been employed in transcribing my rhymes for you, would her health have permitted; but it is very seldom that she can write without being much a sufferer by it. She has almost a constant pain in her side, which forbids it. As soon as it leaves her, or much abates, she will be glad to work for you.

I am, like you and Mr. King, an admirer of clouds, but only when there are blue intervals, and pretty wide ones too, between them. One cloud is

* Professor Martyn lived to an advanced old age, endeared to his family, respected and esteemed by the public, and supported in his last moments by the consolations and hopes of the gospel.

too much for me, but a hundred are not too many. So, with this riddle and with my best respects to Mr. King, to which I add Mrs. Unwin's to you both,—I remain, my dear madam,

Truly yours,

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

The Lodge, June 17, 1790.

My dear Coz.—Here am I, at eight in the morning, in full dress, going a-visiting to Chicheley. We are a strong party, and fill two chaises; Mrs. F. the elder, and Mrs. G. in one; Mrs. F. the younger, and myself in another. Were it not that I shall find Chesters at the end of my journey, I should be inconsolable. That expectation alone supports my spirits; and, even with this prospect before me, when I saw this moment a poor old woman coming up the lane, opposite my window, I could not help sighing, and saying to myself—"Poor, but happy old woman! Thou art exempted by thy situation in life from riding in chaises, and making thyself fine in a morning, happier therefore in my account than I, who am under the cruel necessity of doing both. Neither dost thou write verses, neither hast thou ever heard of the name of Homer, whom I am miserable to abandon for a whole morning!" This, and more of the same sort passed in my mind on seeing the old woman abovesaid.

The troublesome business with which I filled my

last letter is, I hope, by this time concluded, and Mr. Archdeacon satisfied. I can, to be sure, but ill afford to pay fifty pounds for another man's negligence, but would be happy to pay a hundred rather than be treated as if I were insolvent; threatened with attorneys and bums. One would think that, living where I live, I might be exempted from trouble. But alas! as the philosophers often affirm, there is no nook under heaven in which trouble cannot enter; and perhaps, had there never been one philosopher in the world, this is a truth that would not have been always altogether a secret.

I have made two inscriptions lately at the request of Thomas Gifford, Esq. who is sowing twenty acres with acorns on one side of his house, and twenty acres with ditto on the other.* He erects two memorials of stone on the occasion, that, when posterity shall be curious to know the age of the oaks, their curiosity may be gratified.

1.

INSCRIPTION.

Other stones the æra tell
When some feeble mortal fell.
I stand here to date the birth
Of these hardy sons of earth.

Anno 1790.

* At Chillington, Bucks.

2.

INSCRIPTION.

Reader! Behold a monument
That asks no sigh or tear,
Though it perpetuate the event
Of a great burial here.

Anno 1791.

My works therefore will not all perish, or will not all perish soon, for he has ordered his lapidary to cut the characters very deep, and in stone extremely hard. It is not in vain, then, that I have so long exercised the business of a poet. I shall at last reap the reward of my labours, and be immortal probably for many years.

Ever thine,

W. C.

TO THE REV. WALTER BAGOT.

Weston, June 22, 1790.

My dear Friend— * * *

* * * * *

Villoison makes no mention of the serpent, whose skin or bowels, or perhaps both, were honoured with the Iliad and Odyssey inscribed upon them. But I have conversed with a living eye-witness of an African serpent long enough to have afforded skin and guts for the purpose. In Africa there are ants also which frequently destroy these monsters. They are not much larger than ours, but they travel in a column of immense length, and eat through every thing that opposes them. Their bite is like a spark of fire. When these serpents have killed

their prey, lion or tiger or any other large ani
before they swallow him, they take a consider
circuit round about the carcase, to see if the
are coming, because, when they have gorged t
prey, they are unable to escape them. They
nevertheless sometimes surprised by them in t
unwieldy state, and the ants make a passage thro
them. Now if you thought your own story of
mer, bound in snake-skin, worthy of three note
admiration, you cannot do less than add six to m
confessing at the same time, that, if I put yo
the expense of a letter, I do not make you
your money for nothing. But this account I
from a person of most unimpeached veracity.

I rejoice with you in the good Bishop's rem
to St. Asaph,* and especially because the Nor
parsons much more resemble the ants above-n
tioned than he the serpent. He is neither of
size, nor unwieldy, nor voracious; neither, I
say, does he sleep after dinner, according to
practice of the said serpent. But, harmless as
is, I am mistaken if his mutinous clergy did
sometimes disturb his rest, and if he did not
their bite, though they could not actually
through him, in a degree resembling fire. G
men like him, and peaceable, should have good
peaceable folks to deal with; and I heartily v
him such in his new diocese. But if he will k
the clergy to their business, he shall have trou
let him go where he may; and this is bo
spoken, considering that I speak it to one of

* Dr. Lewis Bagot, previously Bishop of Norwich.

reverend body. But ye are like Jeremiah's basket of figs. Some of you could not be better, and some of you are stark naught. Ask the Bishop himself if this be not true!

W. C.

TO MRS. BODHAM.

Weston, June 29, 1790.

My dearest Cousin—It is true that I did sometimes complain to Mrs. Unwin of your long silence. But it is likewise true that I made many excuses for you in my own mind, and did not feel myself at all inclined to be angry, not even much to wonder. There is an awkwardness and a difficulty in writing to those whom distance and length of time have made in a manner new to us, that naturally gives us a check, when you would otherwise be glad to address them. But a time, I hope, is near at hand, when you and I shall be effectually delivered from all such constraints, and correspond as fluently as if our intercourse had suffered much less interruption.

You must not suppose, my dear, that though I may be said to have lived many years with a pen in my hand, I am myself altogether at my ease on this tremendous occasion. Imagine rather, and you will come nearer to the truth, that when I placed this sheet before me, I asked myself more than once "how shall I fill it? One subject indeed presents itself, the pleasant prospect that opens upon me of our coming once more together, but, that once exhausted, with what shall I proceed?" Thus I

questioned myself; but, finding neither end nor profit of such questions, I bravely resolved to dismiss them all at once, and to engage in the great enterprise of a letter to my quondam Rose at a venture. There is great truth in a rant of Nat. Lee's, or of Dryden's, I know not which, who makes an enamoured youth say to his mistress,

And nonsense shall be eloquence in love.

For certain it is, that they who truly love one another are not very nice examiners of each other's style or matter; if an epistle comes, it is always welcome, though it be perhaps neither so wise, nor so witty, as one might have wished to make it. And now, my Cousin, let me tell thee how much I feel myself obliged to Mr. Bodham for the readiness he expresses to accept my invitation. Assure him that, stranger as he is to me at present, and natural as the dread of strangers has ever been to me, I shall yet receive him with open arms, because he is your husband, and loves you dearly. That consideration alone will endear him to me, and I dare say that I shall not find it his only recommendation to my best affections. May the health of his relation (his mother I suppose) be soon restored, and long continued, and may nothing melancholy, of what kind soever, interfere to prevent our joyful meeting. Between the present moment and September our house is clear for your reception, and you have nothing to do but to give us a day or two's notice of your coming. In September we expect Lady Hesketh, and I only regret that our house is not large

enough to hold all together, for, were it possible that you could meet, you would love each other.

Mrs. Unwin bids me offer you her best love. She is never well, but always patient and always cheerful, and feels beforehand that she shall be loth to part with you.

My love to all the dear Donnes of every name! —write soon, no matter about what.

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

Weston, July 7, 1790.

Instead of beginning with the saffron-vested morning, to which Homer invites me, on a morning that has no saffron vest to boast, I shall begin with you.

It is irksome to us both to wait so long as we must for you, but we are willing to hope that by a longer stay you will make us amends for all this tedious procrastination.

Mrs. Unwin has made known her whole case to Mr. Gregson, whose opinion of it has been very consolatory to me. He says indeed it is a case perfectly out of the reach of all physical aid, but at the same time not at all dangerous. Constant pain is a sad grievance, whatever part is affected, and she is hardly ever free from an aching head, as well as an uneasy side, but patience is an anodyne of God's own preparation, and of that he gives her largely.

The French, who like all lively folks are extreme in every thing, are such in their zeal for freedom, and if it were possible to make so noble a cause ridiculous, their manner of promoting it could not fail to do so. Princes and peers reduced to plain gentlemanship, and gentles reduced to a level with their own lacqueys, are excesses of which they will repent hereafter.* Difference of rank and subordination are, I believe, of God's appointment, and consequently essential to the well-being of society: but what we mean by fanaticism in religion is exactly that which animates their politics, and, unless time should sober them, they will, after all, be an unhappy people. Perhaps it deserves not much to be wondered at, that, at their first escape from tyrannical shackles, they should act extravagantly, and treat their kings as they have sometimes treated their idols. To these however they are reconciled in due time again, but their respect for monarchy is at an end. They want nothing now but a little English sobriety, and that they want extremely. I heartily wish them some wit in their anger, for it were great pity that so many millions should be miserable for want of it.

TO JOHN JOHNSON, ESQ.

Weston, July 8, 1790.

My dear Johnny—You do well to perfect your-

* The distinctions of rank were abolished during the French Revolution, and the title of citizen considered to be the only legal and honourable appellation.

self on the violin. Only beware that an amusement so very bewitching as music, especially when we produce it ourselves, do not steal from you ALL those hours that should be given to study. I can be well content that it should serve you as a refreshment after severer exercises, but not that it should engross you wholly. Your own good sense will most probably dictate to you this precaution, and I might have spared you the trouble of it, but I have a degree of zeal for your proficiency in more important pursuits, that would not suffer me to suppress it.

Having delivered my conscience by giving you this sage admonition, I will convince you that I am a censor not over and above severe, by acknowledging in the next place that I have known very good performers on the violin, very learned also; and my cousin, Dr. Spencer Madan, is an instance.

I am delighted that you have engaged your sister to visit us; for I say to myself, if John be amiable what must Catherine be? For we males, be we angelic as we may, are always surpassed by the ladies. But know this, that I shall not be in love with either of you, if you stay with us only a few days, for you talk of a week or so. Correct this erratum, I beseech you, and convince us, by a much longer continuance here, that it was one.

W. C.

Mrs. Unwin has never been well since you saw her. You are not passionately fond of letter-writing, I perceive, who have dropped a lady; but you will be a loser by the bargain; for one letter of hers,

in point of real utility and sterling value, is worth twenty of mine, and you will never have another from her till you have earned it.

TO MRS. KING.*

The Lodge, July 16, 1790.

My dear Madam—Taking it for granted that this will find you at Perten-hall, I follow you with an early line and a hasty one, to tell you how much we rejoice to have seen yourself and Mr. King; and how much regret you have left behind you. The wish that we expressed when we were together, Mrs. Unwin and I have more than once expressed since your departure, and have always felt it—that it had pleased Providence to appoint our habitations nearer to each other. This is a life of wishes, and they only are happy who have arrived where wishes cannot enter. We shall live now in hope of a second meeting and a longer interview; which, if it please God to continue to you and to Mr. King your present measure of health, you will be able, I trust, to contrive hereafter. You did not leave us without encouragement to expect it; and I know that you do not raise expectations but with a sincere design to fulfil them.

Nothing shall be wanting, on our part, to accomplish in due time a journey to Perten-hall. But I am a strange creature, who am less able than any

* Private Correspondence.

man living to project any thing out of the common course, with a reasonable prospect of performance. I have singularities, of which, I believe, at present you know nothing; and which would fill you with wonder, if you knew them. I will add, however, in justice to myself, that they would not lower me in your good opinion; though, perhaps, they might tempt you to question the soundness of my upper story. Almost twenty years have I been thus unhappily circumstanced; and the remedy is in the hand of God only. That I make you this partial communication on the subject, conscious, at the same time, that you are well worthy to be entrusted with the whole, is merely because the recital would be too long for a letter, and painful both to me and to you. But all this may vanish in a moment; and, if it please God, it shall. In the mean time, my dear madam, remember me in your prayers, and mention me at those times, as one whom it has pleased God to afflict with singular visitations.

How I regret, for poor Mrs. Unwin's sake, your distance! She has no friend suitable as you to her disposition and character, in all the neighbourhood. Mr. King, too, is just the friend and companion with whom I could be happy; but such grow not in this country. Pray tell him that I remember him with much esteem and regard; and, believe me, my dear madam, with the sincerest affection,

Yours entirely,

W. C.

TO JOHN JOHNSON, ESQ.

Weston, July 31, 1790.

You have by this time, I presume, answered Lad Hesketh's letter? if not, answer it without delay and this injunction I give you, judging that it ma not be entirely unnecessary, for, though I have see you but once, and only for two or three days, have found out that you are a scatter-brain.* made the discovery perhaps the sooner, because i this you very much resemble myself, who, in th course of my life, through mere carelessness an inattention, lost many advantages; an insupe able shyness has also deprived me of many. An here again there is a resemblance between u You will do well to guard against both, for of bot I believe, you have a considerable share as well myself.

We long to see you again, and are only co cerned at the short stay you propose to make wi us. If time should seem to you as short at Westo as it seems to us, your visit here will be gone " a dream when one awaketh, or as a watch in t night."

It is a life of dreams, but the pleasantest one n turally wishes longest.

I shall find employment for you, having ma already some part of the fair copy of the Odyss a foul one. I am revising it for the last tim

* This title was not long merited.

and spare nothing that I can mend. The Iliad is finished.

If you have Donne's poems, bring them with you, for I have not seen them many years, and should like to look them over.†

You may treat us too, if you please, with a little of your music, for I seldom hear any, and delight much in it. You need not fear a rival, for we have but two fiddles in the neighbourhood—one a gardener's, the other a tailor's: terrible performers both!

W. C.

Mrs. Newton was at this time in very declining health. It is to this subject that Cowper alludes in the following letter.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.*

The Lodge, Aug. 11, 1790.

My dear friend—That I may not seem unreasonably tardy in answering your last kind letter, I steal a few minutes from my customary morning business, (at present the translation of Mr. Van Lier's Narrative,) to inform you that I received it safe from the hands of Judith Hughes, whom we met in the middle of Hill-field. Desirous of gaining the earliest intelligence possible concerning Mrs. Newton, we were going to call on her, and

† Dr. Donne was the author of some beautiful hymns and sonnets, a few of which are inserted in Izaak Walton's life of him.

* Private Correspondence.

she was on her way to us. It grieved us much that her news on that subject corresponded so little with our earnest wishes of Mrs. Newton's amendment. But if Dr. Benamer* still gives hope of her recovery, it is not, I trust, without substantial reason for doing so; much less can I suppose that he would do it contrary to his own persuasions, because a thousand reasons, that must influence, in such a case, the conduct of a humane and sensible physician, concur to forbid it. If it shall please God to restore her, no tidings will give greater joy to us. In the mean time, it is our comfort to know, that in any event you will be sure of supports invaluable, and that cannot fail you; though, at the same time, I know well that, with your feelings, and especially on so affecting a subject, you will have need of the full exercise of all your faith and resignation. To a greater trial no man can be called, than that of being a helpless eye-witness of the sufferings of one he loves and loves tenderly. This I know by experience; but it is long since I had any experience of those communications from above, which alone can enable us to acquit ourselves, on such an occasion, as we ought. But it is otherwise with you, and I rejoice that it is so.

With respect to my own initiation into the secret of animal magnetism, I have a thousand doubts. Twice, as you know, I have been overwhelmed with

* Dr. Benamer was a pious and excellent man, whose house was the resort of religious persons at that time, who went there for the purpose of edification. Mr. Newton was a regular attendant on these occasions.

the blackest despair; and at those times every thing in which I have been at any period of my life concerned has afforded to the enemy a handle against me. I tremble, therefore, almost at every step I take, lest on some future similar occasion it should yield him opportunity, and furnish him with means to torment me. Decide for me, if you can; and in the mean time, present, if you please, my respectful compliments and very best thanks to Mr. Holloway, for his most obliging offer.* I am, perhaps, the only man living who would hesitate a moment, whether, on such easy terms, he should or should not accept it. But if he finds another like me, he will make a greater discovery than even that which he has already made of the principles of this wonderful art. For I take it for granted, that he is the gentleman whom you once mentioned to me as indebted only to his own penetration for the knowledge of it.

I shall proceed, you may depend on it, with all possible dispatch in your business. Had it fallen into my hands a few months later, I should have made a quicker riddance; for, before the autumn shall be ended, I hope to have done with Homer. But my first morning hour or two (now and then a letter which must be written excepted) shall always be at your service till the whole is finished.

Commending you and Mrs. Newton, with all the little power I have of that sort, to His fatherly and

* Newton had suggested the propriety of Cowper trying the effect of animal magnetism, in the hopes of mitigating his disorder, but he declined the offer.

tender care in whom you have both believed, in which friendly office I am fervently joined by Mrs. Unwin, I remain, with our sincere love to you both and to Miss Catlett, my dear friend, most affectionately yours,

W. C.

The termination of a laborious literary undertaking is an eventful period in an author's life. The following letter announces the termination of Cowper's Homeric version, and its conveyance to the press.

TO MRS. BODHAM.

Weston, Sept. 9, 1790.

My dearest Cousin—I am truly sorry to be forced after all to resign the hope of seeing you and Mr. Bodham at Weston this year; the next may possibly be more propitious, and I heartily wish it may. Poor Catherine's* unseasonable indisposition has also cost us a disappointment which we much regret, and, were it not that Johnny has made shift to reach us, we should think ourselves completely unfortunate. But him we have, and him we will hold as long as we can, so expect not very soon to see him in Norfolk. He is so harmless, cheerful, gentle, and good-tempered, and I am so entirely at my ease with him, that I cannot surrender him without a *needs must*, even to those who have a superior claim

* The Rev. J. Johnson's sister.

upon him. He left us yesterday morning, and whither do you think he is gone, and on what errand? Gone, as sure as you are alive, to London, and to convey my Homer to the bookseller's. But he will return the day after to-morrow, and I mean to part with him no more till necessity shall force us asunder. Suspect me not, my Cousin, of being such a monster as to have imposed this task myself on your kind nephew, or even to have thought of doing it. It happened that one day, as we chatted by the fireside, I expressed a wish that I could hear of some trusty body going to London, to whose care I might consign my voluminous labours, the work of five years. For I purpose never to visit that city again myself, and should have been uneasy to have left a charge, of so much importance to me, altogether to the care of a stage-coachman. Johnny had no sooner heard my wish than, offering himself to the service, he fulfilled it; and his offer was made in such terms, and accompanied with a countenance and manner expressive of so much alacrity, that, unreasonable as I thought it at first to give him so much trouble, I soon found that I should mortify him by a refusal. He is gone therefore with a box full of poetry, of which I think nobody will plunder him. He has only to say what it is, and there is no commodity I think a freebooter would covet less.

W. C.

The marriage of his friend, Mr. Rose, was too

interesting an event not to claim Cowper's warm congratulations.

TO SAMUEL ROSE, ESQ.

The Lodge, Sept.13, 1790.

My dear Friend—Your letter was particularly welcome to me, not only because it came after a long silence, but because it brought me good news —news of your marriage, and consequently, I trust, of your happiness. May that happiness be durable as your lives, and may you be the *Felices ter et amplius* of whom Horace sings so sweetly! This is my sincere wish, and, though expressed in prose, shall serve as your epithalamium. You comfort me when you say that your marriage will not deprive us of the sight of you hereafter. If you do not wish that I should regret your union, you must make that assurance good as often as you have opportunity.

After perpetual versification during five years, I find myself at last a vacant man, and reduced to read for my amusement. My Homer is gone to the press, and you will imagine that I feel a void in consequence. The proofs however will be coming soon, and I shall avail myself, with all my force, of this last opportunity to make my work as perfect as I wish it. I shall not therefore be long time destitute of employment, but shall have sufficient to keep me occupied all the winter and part of the ensuing spring, for Johnson purposes to publish either in March, April, or May—my very preface is finish-

ed. It did not cost me much trouble, being neither long nor learned. I have spoken my mind as freely as decency would permit on the subject of Pope's version, allowing him at the same time all the merit to which I think him entitled. I have given my reasons for translating in blank verse, and hold some discourse on the mechanism of it, chiefly with a view to obviate the prejudices of some people against it. I expatiate a little on the manner in which I think Homer ought to be rendered, and in which I have endeavoured to render him myself, and anticipated two or three cavils to which I foresee that I shall be liable from the ignorant or uncandid, in order, if possible, to prevent them. These are the chief heads of my preface, and the whole consists of about twelve pages.

It is possible, when I come to treat with Johnson about the copy, I may want some person to negociate for me, and, knowing no one so intelligent as yourself in books, or so well qualified to estimate their just value, I shall beg leave to resort to and rely on you as my negociator. But I will not trouble you unless I should see occasion. My cousin was the bearer of my MSS. to London. He went on purpose, and returns to-morrow. Mrs. Unwin's affectionate felicitations added to my own, conclude me,

Dear friend,

Sincerely yours,

W. C.

The trees of a colonnade will solve my riddle.*

* What are they, which stand at a distance from each other, and meet without ever moving?

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.*

The Lodge, Sept. 17, 1790.

My dear Friend—I received last night a copy of my subscribers' names from Johnson, in which I see how much I have been indebted to yours and to Mrs. Hill's solicitations. Accept my best thanks, so justly due to you both. It is an illustrious catalogue, in respect of rank and title, but methinks I should have liked it as well had it been more numerous. The sum subscribed, however, will defray the expense of printing, which is as much as, in these unsubscribing days, I had any reason to promise myself. I devoutly second your droll wish, that the booksellers may contend about me. The more the better: seven times seven, if they please; and let them fight with the fury of Achilles,

> Till ev'ry rubric-post be crimson'd o'er
> With blood of booksellers, in battle slain,
> For me, and not a periwig untorn.

Most truly yours,

W. C.

TO MRS. KING.*

Weston, Oct. 5, 1790.

My dear Madam—I am truly concerned that you have so good an excuse for your silence. Were it

* Private Correspondence.

proposed to my choice, whether you should omit to write through illness or indifference to me, I should be selfish enough, perhaps, to find decision difficult for a few moments; but have such an opinion at the same time of my affection for you, as to be verily persuaded that I should at last make a right option, and wish you rather to forget me than to be afflicted. But there is One wiser and more your friend than I can possibly be, who appoints all your sufferings, and who, by a power altogether his own, is able to make them good for you.

I wish heartily that my verses had been more worthy of the counterpane, their subject.* The gratitude I felt when you brought it and gave it to me might have inspired better; but a head full of Homer, I find, by sad experience, is good for little else. Lady Hesketh, who is here, has seen your gift, and pronounced it the most beautiful and best executed of the kind she ever saw.

I have lately received from my bookseller a copy of my subscribers' names, and do not find among them the name of Mr. Professor Martyn. I mention it because you informed me, some time since, of his kind intention to number himself among my encouragers on this occasion, and because I am unwilling to lose, for want of speaking in time, the honour that his name will do me. It is possible,

* Mrs. King presented the poet with a counterpane, in patch-work, of her own making. In acknowledgment, he addressed to her the verses beginning,

"The bard, if e'er he feel at all,
Must sure be quicken'd by a call," &c. &c.

too, that he may have subscribed, and that his non-appearance may be owing merely to Johnson's having forgot to enter his name. Perhaps you will have an opportunity to ascertain the matter. The catalogue will be printed soon, and published in the "Analytical Review," as the last and most effectual way of advertising my translation, and the name of the gentleman in question will be particularly serviceable to me in this first edition of it.

My whole work is in the bookseller's hands, and ought by this time to be in the press. The next spring is the time appointed for the publication. It is a genial season, when people who are ever good-tempered at all are sure to be so; a circumstance well worthy of an author's attention, especially of mine, who am just going to give a thump on the outside of the critics' hive, that will probably alarm them all.

Mrs. Unwin, I think, is on the whole rather improved in her health since we had the pleasure of your short visit; I should say, the pleasure of your visit, and the pain of its shortness.

I am, my dearest Madam,

Most truly yours,

W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.*

The Lodge, Oct. 15, 1790.

My dear Friend—We were surprised and grieved

* Private Correspondence.

at Mrs. Scott's * sudden departure; grieved, you may suppose, not for *her*, but for *him*, whose loss, except that in God he has an all-sufficient good, is irreparable. The day of separation between those who have loved long and well is an awful day, inasmuch as it calls the Christian's faith and submission to the severest trial. Yet I account those happy, who, if they are severely tried, shall yet be supported, and be carried safely through. What would become of me on a similar occasion! I have one comfort, and only one: bereft of that, I should have nothing left to lean on; for my spiritual props have long since been struck from under me.

I have no objection at all to being known as the translator of Van Lier's Letters, when they shall be published. Rather, I am ambitious of it, as an honour. It will serve to prove, that, if I have spent much time to little purpose in the translation of Homer, some small portion of my time has, however, been well disposed of.

The honour of your preface prefixed to my poems will be on my side; for surely, to be known as the friend of a much-favoured minister of God's word is a more illustrious distinction, in reality, than to have the friendship of any poet in the world to boast of.

We sympathize truly with you under all your tender concern for Mrs. Newton, and with her in all her sufferings from such various and discordant maladies. Alas! what a difference have twenty-

* The wife of the Rev. Thomas Scott, the author of one of the best Commentaries on the Bible ever published.—Mr. Scott was preacher at the Lock Hospital at this time.

three years made in us and in our condition! for just so long it is since Mrs. Unwin and I came into Buckinghamshire. Yesterday was the anniversary of that memorable æra. Farewell.

W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.*

The Lodge, Oct. 26, 1790.

My dear Friend—We should have been happy to have received from you a more favourable account of Mrs. Newton's health. Yours is indeed a post of observation, and of observation the most interesting It is well that you are enabled to bear the stress and intenseness of it without prejudice to your own health, or impediment to your ministry.

The last time I wrote to Johnson, I made known to him your wishes to have your preface printed and affixed, as soon as an opportunity shall offer expressing, at the same time, my own desires to have it done.† Whether I shall have any answer to my proposal is a matter of much uncertainty

* Private Correspondence.

† We here subjoin the letter which Cowper addressed to Johnson, the bookseller, on this occasion.

Weston, Oct. 3, 1790.

Mr. Newton having again requested that the Preface which he wrote for my first volume may be prefixed to it, I am desirous to gratify him in a particular that so emphatically bespeaks his friendship for me; and, should my books see another edition, shall be obliged to you if you will add it accordingly.

W. C.

for he is always either too idle or too busy, I know not which, to write to me. Should you happen to pass his way, perhaps it would not be amiss to speak to him on the subject; for it is easier to carry a point by six words spoken than by writing as many sheets about it. I have asked him hither, when my cousin Johnson shall leave us, which will be in about a fortnight; and, should he come, will enforce the measure myself.

A yellow shower of leaves is falling continually from all the trees in the country. A few moments only seem to have passed since they were buds; and in a few moments more they will have disappeared. It is one advantage of a rural situation, that it affords many hints of the rapidity with which life flies, that do not occur in towns and cities. It is impossible for a man conversant with such scenes as surround me not to advert daily to the shortness of his existence here, admonished of it, as he must be, by ten thousand objects. There was a time when I could contemplate my present state, and consider myself as a thing of a day with pleasure; when I numbered the seasons as they passed in swift rotation, as a schoolboy numbers the days that interpose between the next vacation, when he shall see his parents, and enjoy his home again. But to make so just an estimate of a life like this is no longer in my power. The consideration of my short continuance here, which was once grateful to me, now fills me with regret. I would live and live always, and am become such another wretch as Mæcenas was, who wished for long life, he cared

not at what expense of sufferings. The only consolation left me on this subject is, that the voice of the Almighty can in one moment cure me of this mental infirmity. That He can, I know by experience; and there are reasons for which I ought to believe that He will. But from hope to despair is a transition that I have made so often, that I can only consider the hope that may come, and that sometimes I believe will, as a short prelude of joy to a miserable conclusion of sorrow that shall never end. Thus are my brightest prospects clouded, and thus, to me, is hope itself become like a withered flower, that has lost both its hue and its fragrance.

I ought not to have written in this dismal strain to you, in your present trying situation, nor did I intend it. You have more need to be cheered than to be saddened; but a dearth of other themes constrained me to choose myself for a subject, and of myself I can write no otherwise.

Adieu, my dear friend. We are well; and, notwithstanding all that I have said, I am myself as cheerful as usual. Lady Hesketh is here, and in her company even I, except now and then for a moment, forget my sorrows.

I remain sincerely yours,

W. C.

The purport of this letter is painful, but it is explained by the peculiarity of Cowper's case. The state of mind, which the Christian *ought to realize*, should be a willingness to remain or to depart, as may seem best to the supreme Disposer of events;

though the predominating feeling (where there is an assured and lively hope) will be that of the apostle, viz. that "to be with Christ is far better." The question is, how is this lively hope and assurance to be obtained? How is the sense of guilt, and the fear of death and judgment, to be overcome? The gospel proclaims the appointed remedy. "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world."* "I, even I, am He, which blotteth out all thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins."† "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and he is the propitiation for our sins."‡ The cordial reception of this great gospel truth into the heart, the humble reliance upon God's pardoning mercy, through the blood of the cross, will, by the grace of God, infallibly lead to inward joy and peace. "Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ. By whom also we have access by faith unto this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God."§ The same divine grace that assures peace to the conscience will also change and renew the heart, and plant within it those holy principles and affections that will lead to newness of life. The promise of the Blood to pardon, and the Spirit to teach and to sanctify, are the two great fundamental doctrines of the gospel.‖

* John i. 29. † Isaiah xliii. 25.

‡ 1 John ii. 1, 2. § Rom. v. 1, 2.

‖ 1 John i. 7. Isaiah lxi. 1, 2, 3. Luke ii. 9—13. John xiv. 16, 17.

TO MRS. BODHAM.

Weston, Nov. 21, 1790.

My dear Coz.—Our kindness to your nephew is no more than he must entitle himself to wherever he goes. His amiable disposition and manners will never fail to secure him a warm place in the affection of all who know him. The advice I gave respecting his poem on Audley End was dictated by my love of him, and a sincere desire of his success. It is one thing to write what may please our friends, who, because they are such, are apt to be a little biassed in our favour; and another to write what may please every body; because they who have no connexion or even knowledge of the author will be sure to find fault if they can. My advice, however, salutary and necessary as it seemed to me, was such as I dare not have given to a poet of less diffidence than he. Poets are to a proverb irritable, and he is the only one I ever knew who seems to have no spark of that fire about him. He has left us about a fortnight, and sorry we were to lose him; but had he been my son he must have gone, and I could not have regretted him more. If his sister be still with you, present my love to her, and tell her how much I wish to see them at Weston together.

Mrs. Hewitt probably remembers more of my childhood than I can recollect either of hers or my own; but this I recollect, that the days of that

period were happy days compared with most I have seen since. There are few perhaps in the world who have not cause to look back with regret on the days of infancy; yet, to say the truth, I suspect some deception in this. For infancy itself has its cares, and though we cannot now conceive how trifles could affect us much, it is certain that they did. Trifles they appear now, but such they were not then.

W. C.

TO JOHN JOHNSON, ESQ.

(MY BIRTH-DAY.)

Weston, Friday, Nov. 26, 1790.

My dearest Johnny—I am happy that you have escaped from the claws of Euclid into the bosom of Justinian. It is useful, I suppose, to *every* man to be well grounded in the principles of jurisprudence, and I take it to be a branch of science that bids much fairer to enlarge the mind, and give an accuracy of reasoning, than all the mathematics in the world. Mind your studies, and you will soon be wiser than I can hope to be.

We had a visit on Monday from one of the first women in the world; in point of character, I mean, and accomplishments, the dowager Lady Spencer!* I may receive, perhaps, some honours hereafter,

* The mother of the late Earl Spencer, and of the Duchess of Devonshire, and the person to whom he dedicated his version of the Odyssey.

should my translation speed according to my wishes, and the pains I have taken with it; but shall never receive any that I shall esteem so highly. She is indeed worthy to whom I should dedicate, and, may but my Odyssey prove as worthy of her, I shall have nothing to fear from the critics.

Yours, my dear Johnny,
With much affection,
W. C.

TO MRS. KING.*

The Lodge, Nov. 29, 1790.

My dear Madam—I value highly, as I ought and hope that I always shall, the favourable opinion of such men as Mr. Martyn: though, to say the truth, their commendations, instead of making me proud, have rather a tendency to humble me, conscious as I am that I am over-rated. There is an old piece of advice, given by an ancient poet and satirist, which it behoves every man who stands well in the opinion of others to lay up in his bosom:—*Take care to be what you are reported to be.* By due attention to this wise counsel, it is possible to turn the praises of our friends to good account, and to convert that which might prove an incentive to vanity into a lesson of wisdom. I will keep your good and respectable friend's letter very safely, and restore it to you the first opportunity. I beg, my dear madam, that you will present my best compli-

* Private Correspondence.

ments to Mr. Martyn, when you shall either see him next or write to him.

To that gentleman's inquiries I am, doubtless, obliged for the recovery of no small proportion of my subscription-list: for, in consequence of his application to Johnson, and very soon after it, I received from him no fewer than forty-five names, that had been omitted in the list he sent me, and that would probably never have been thought of more. No author, I believe, has a more inattentive or indolent bookseller: but he has every body's good word for liberality and honesty; therefore I must be content.

The press proceeds at present as well as I can reasonably wish. A month has passed since we began, and I revised this morning the first sheet of the sixth Iliad. Mrs. Unwin begs to add a line from herself, so that I have only room to subjoin my best respects to Mr. King, and to say that I am truly,

My dear Madam, yours,

W. C.

TO SAMUEL ROSE, ESQ.

The Lodge, Nov. 30, 1790.

My dear Friend—I will confess that I thought your letter somewhat tardy, though, at the same time, I made every excuse for you, except, as it seems, the right. *That* indeed was out of the reach of all possible conjecture. I could not guess that

your silence was occasioned by your being occupied with either thieves or thief-takers. Since, however, the cause was such, I rejoice that your labours were not in vain, and that the freebooters who had plundered your friend are safe in limbo. I admire, too, as much as I rejoice in your success, the indefatigable spirit that prompted you to pursue, with such unremitting perseverance, an object not to be reached but at the expense of infinite trouble, and that must have led you into an acquaintance with scenes and characters the most horrible to a mind like yours. I see in this conduct the zeal and firmness of your friendship, to whomsoever professed, and, though I wanted not a proof of it myself, contemplate so unequivocal an indication of what you really are, and of what I always believed you to be, with much pleasure. May you rise from the condition of an humble prosecutor, or witness, to the bench of judgment!

When your letter arrived, it found me with the worst and most obstinate cold that I ever caught. This was one reason why it had not a speedier answer. Another is, that, except Tuesday morning, there is none in the week in which I am not engaged in the last revisal of my translation; the revisal I mean of my proof-sheets. To this business I give myself with an assiduity and attention truly admirable, and set an example, which, if other poets could be apprised of, they would do well to follow. Miscarriages in authorship (I am persuaded) are as often to be ascribed to want of pains-taking as to want of ability.

Lady Hesketh, Mrs. Unwin, and myself, often mention you, and always in terms that, though you would blush to hear them, you need not be ashamed of; at the same time wishing much that you could change our trio into a quartetto.

W. C.

TO THE REV. WALTER BAGOT.

Weston, Dec. 1, 1790.

My dear Friend—It is plain that you understand trap, as we used to say at school: for you begin with accusing me of long silence, conscious yourself, at the same time, that you have been half a year in my debt, or thereabout. But I will answer your accusations with a boast—with a boast of having intended many a day to write to you again, notwithstanding your long insolvency. Your brother and sister of Chicheley can both witness for me, that, weeks since, I testified such an intention, and, if I did not execute it, it was not for want of good-will, but for want of leisure. When will you be able to glory of such designs, so liberal and magnificent, you who have nothing to do, by your own confession, but to grow fat and saucy? Add to all this, that I have had a violent cold, such as I never have but at the first approach of winter, and such as at that time I seldom escape. A fever accompanied it, and an incessant cough.

You measure the speed of printers, of my printer at least, rather by your own wishes than by any just

standard. Mine (I believe) is as nimble a one as falls to the share of poets in general, though not nimble enough to satisfy either the author or his friends. I told you that my work would go to press in autumn, and so it did. But it had been six weeks in London ere the press began to work upon it. About a month since we began to print, and, at the rate of nine sheets in a fortnight, have proceeded to about the middle of the sixth Iliad. "No further?"—you say. I answer—"No, nor even so far, without much scolding on my part, both at the bookseller and the printer." But courage, my friend! Fair and softly, as we proceed, we shall find our way through at last; and, in confirmation of this hope, while I write this, another sheet arrives. I expect to publish in the spring.

I love and thank you for the ardent desire you express to hear me bruited abroad, *et per ora virûm volitantem*. For your encouragement, I will tell you that I read, myself at least, with wonderful complacence what I have done; and if the world, when it shall appear, do not like it as well as I, we will both say and swear with Fluellin, that "it is an ass and a fool (look you!) and a prating coxcomb."

I felt no ambition of the laurel.* Else, though vainly, perhaps, I had friends who would have made a stir on my behalf on that occasion. I confess that, when I learned the new condition of the office, that odes were no longer required, and that the salary was increased, I felt not the same dislike of it. But I could neither go to court, nor could I kiss

* The office of Poet Laureat, mentioned in a former letter.

hands, were it for a much more valuable consideration. Therefore never expect to hear that royal favours find out me!

Adieu, my dear old friend! I will send you a mortuary copy soon, and in the mean time remain

Ever yours,

W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.*

The Lodge, Dec. 5, 1790.

My dear Friend—Sometimes I am too sad, and sometimes too busy to write. Both these causes have concurred lately to keep me silent. But more than by either of these I have been hindered, since I received your last, by a violent cold, which oppressed me during almost the whole month of November.

Your letter affects us with both joy and sorrow: with sorrow and sympathy respecting poor Mrs. Newton, whose feeble and dying state suggests a wish for her release rather than for her continuance; and joy on your account, who are enabled to bear, with so much resignation and cheerful acquiescence in the will of God, the prospect of a loss, which even they who know you best apprehended might prove too much for you. As to Mrs. Newton's interest in the best things, none, intimately acquainted with her as we have been, could doubt it. She doubted it indeed herself; but though it is not our duty to doubt, any more

* Private Correspondence.

than it is our privilege, I have always considered the self-condemning spirit, to which such doubts are principally owing, as one of the most favourable symptoms of a nature spiritually renewed, and have many a time heard you make the same observation.

[*Torn off.*]

We believe that the best Christian is occasionally subject to doubts and fears; and that they form a part of the great warfare. That it is our privilege and duty to cultivate an habitual sense of peace in the conscience, and that this peace will be enjoyed in proportion as faith is in exercise, and the soul is in communion with God, we fully agree. But who that is acquainted with the inward experiences of the Christian, does not know that there are alternations of joy and fear, of triumph, and of depression? The Psalms of David furnish many instances of this fact, as well as the history of the most eminent saints recorded in Scripture. "Though I am sometime afraid, yet put I my trust in thee." We conceive these words to be an exemplification of the truth of the case. When, therefore, we hear persons speak of the entire absence of sin and infirmity, and exemption from doubts and fears, we are strongly disposed to believe that they labour under great self-deception, and know little of their own hearts, in thus arguing against the general testimony of the Church of Christ in all ages. A plain and pious Christian once told us of an appropriate remark that

he addressed to an individual who professed to be wholly free from any fears on this subject. "If," observed this excellent man, "you have no fears for yourself, you must allow me to entertain some for you."

TO JOHN JOHNSON, ESQ.

Weston Dec. 18, 1790.

I perceive myself so flattered by the instances of illustrious success mentioned in your letter, that I feel all the amiable modesty, for which I was once so famous, sensibly giving way to a spirit of vainglory.

The King's college subscription makes me proud —the effect that my verses have had on your two young friends, the mathematicians, makes me proud, and I am, if possible, prouder still of the contents of the letter that you inclosed.

You complained of being stupid, and sent me one of the cleverest letters. I have not complained of being stupid, and sent you one of the dullest. But it is no matter. I never aim at any thing above the pitch of every day's scribble, when I write to those I love.

Homer proceeds, my boy! We shall get through it in time, and (I hope) by the time appointed. We are now in the tenth Iliad. I expect the ladies every minute to breakfast. You have their best love. Mine attends the whole army of Donnes at Mattishall Green* assembled. How happy should I find myself, were I but one of the party! My

* In Norfolk.

capering days are over. But do you caper for me, that you may give them some idea of the happiness I should feel were I in the midst of them!

W. C.

TO MRS. KING.*

The Lodge, Dec. 31, 1790.

My dear Madam—Returning from my walk at half-past three, I found your welcome messenger in the kitchen; and, entering the study, found also the beautiful present with which you had charged him.† We have all admired it (for Lady Hesketh was here to assist us in doing so;) and for my own particular, I return you my sincerest thanks, a very inadequate compensation. Mrs. Unwin, not satisfied to send you thanks only, begs your acceptance likewise of a turkey, which, though the figure of it might not much embellish a counterpane, may possibly serve hereafter to swell the dimensions of a feather-bed.

I have lately been visited with an indisposition much more formidable than that which I mentioned to you in my last—a nervous fever; a disorder to which I am subject, and which I dread above all others, because it comes attended by a melancholy perfectly insupportable. This is the first day

* Private Correspondence.

† This counterpane is mentioned in a previous letter, dated Oct. 5th, in this year: so that, unless it was taken back and then returned in an improved state, there seems to be some error, that we do not profess to explain.

of my complete recovery, the first in which I have perceived no symptoms of my terrible malady; and the only drawback on this comfort that I feel is the intelligence contained in yours, that neither Mr. King nor yourself are well. I dread always, both for my own health and for that of my friends, the unhappy influences of a year worn out. But, my dear madam, this is the last day of it; and I resolve to hope that the new year shall obliterate all the disagreeables of the old one. I can wish nothing more warmly than that it may prove a propitious year to you.

My poetical operations, I mean of the occasional kind, have lately been pretty much at a stand. I told you, I believe, in my last, that Homer, in the present stage of the process, occupied me more intensely than ever. He still continues to do so, and threatens, till he shall be completely finished, to make all other composition impracticable. I have, however, written the mortuary verses as usual; but the wicked clerk for whom I write them has not yet sent me the impression. I transmit to you the long-promised Catharina; and, were it possible that I could transcribe the others, would send them also. There is a way, however, by which I can procure a frank, and you shall not want them long.

I remain, dearest Madam,

Ever yours,

W. C.

We have now the pleasure of introducing to the reader a lady, of whom we should say much, if a sense of propriety did not impose silence upon our pen. The Catharina, recorded by the muse of Cowper, was Miss Stapylton at that time, subsequently married to Mr. George Throckmorton Courtney, and finally Lady Throckmorton, by the decease of the elder brother, Sir John. As we cannot impose on the poet the restraint which we are compelled to practise in our own case, we shall beg leave to insert the following verses, written on the occasion of her visit to Weston.

She came—she is gone—we have met—
And meet perhaps never again;
The sun of that moment is set,
And seems to have risen in vain.
Catharina* has fled like a dream—
(So vanishes pleasure, alas!)
But has left a regret and esteem,
That will not so suddenly pass.

The last ev'ning ramble we made,
Catharina, Maria,† and I,
Our progress was often delay'd
By the nightingale warbling nigh.
We paus'd under many a tree,
And much she was charm'd with a tone,
Less sweet to Maria and me,
Who so lately had witness'd her own.

* Miss Stapylton, afterwards Lady Throckmorton, and the person to whom the present undertaking is dedicated.

† The wife of Sir John Throckmorton.

My numbers that day she had sung,
And gave them a grace so divine,
As only her musical tongue
Could infuse into numbers of mine.
The longer I heard, I esteem'd
The work of my fancy the more,
And e'en to myself never seem'd
So tuneful a poet before.

Though the pleasures of London exceed
In number the days of the year,
Catharina, did nothing impede,
Would feel herself happier here;
For the close-woven arches of limes
On the banks of our river, I know,
Are sweeter to her many times
Than aught that the city can show.

So it is, when the mind is imbued
With a well-judging taste from above,
Then, whether embellish'd or rude,
'Tis nature alone that we love.
The achievements of art may amuse,
May even our wonder excite,
But groves, hills, and valleys, diffuse
A lasting, a sacred delight.

Since then in the rural recess
Catharina alone can rejoice,
May it still be her lot to possess
The scene of her sensible choice!
To inhabit a mansion remote
From the clatter of street-pacing steeds,
And by Philomel's annual note
To measure the life that she leads.

With her book, and her voice, and her lyre,
To wing all her moments at home,
And with scenes that new rapture inspire,
As oft as it suits her to roam,

She will have just the life she prefers,
With little to hope or to fear,
And ours would be pleasant as hers,
Might we view her enjoying it here.

TO THE REV. WALTER BAGOT.

Weston, Jan. 4, 1791.

My dear Friend—You would long since have received an answer to your last, had not the wicked clerk of Northampton delayed to send me the printed copy of my annual dirge, which I waited to enclose. Here it is at last, and much good may it do the readers!*

I have regretted that I could not write sooner, especially because it well became me to reply as soon as possible to your kind inquiries after my health, which has been both better and worse since I wrote last. The cough was cured, or nearly so, when I received your letter, but I have lately been afflicted with a nervous fever, a malady formidable to me above all others, on account of the terror and dejection of spirits that in my case always accompany it. I even look forward, for this reason, to the month now current, with the most miserable apprehensions; for in this month the distemper has twice seized me. I wish to be thankful, however, to the sovereign Dispenser both of health and sickness, that, though I have felt cause enough to tremble, he gives me now encouragement to hope that I may dismiss

* See mortuary verses composed on this occasion.

my fears, and expect, for this January at least, to escape it.

* * * *

The mention of quantity reminds me of a remark that I have seen somewhere, possibly in Johnson, to this purport, that, the syllables in our language being neither long nor short, our verse accordingly is less beautiful than the verse of the Greeks or Romans, because requiring less artifice in its construction. But I deny the fact, and am ready to depose on oath, that I find every syllable as distinguishably and clearly, either long or short, in our language, as in any other. I know also, that without an attention to the quantity of our syllables good verse cannot possibly be written, and that ignorance of this matter is one reason why we see so much that is good for nothing. The movement of a verse is always either shuffling or graceful, according to our management in this particular, and Milton gives almost as many proofs of it in his Paradise Lost as there are lines in the poem. Away, therefore, with all such unfounded observations! I would not give a farthing for many bushels of them—nor you perhaps for this letter. Yet, upon recollection, forasmuch as I know you to be a dear lover of literary gossip, I think it possible you may esteem it highly.

Believe me, my dear friend, most truly yours,

W. C.

The following letter records the death of Mrs. Newton, the object of so early and lasting an attachment on the part of the Rev. John Newton.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.*

Weston, Jan. 20, 1791.

My dear Friend—Had you been a man of this world, I should have held myself bound by the law of ceremonies to have sent you long since my tribute of condolence. I have sincerely mourned with you; and though you have lost a wife, and I only a friend, yet do I understand too well the value of such a friend as Mrs. Newton not to have sympathised with you very nearly. But you are not a man of this world; neither can you, who have both the Scripture and the Giver of Scripture to console you, have any need of aid from others, or expect it from such spiritual imbecility as mine. I considered, likewise, that receiving a letter from Mrs. Unwin, you, in fact, received one from myself, with this difference only,—that hers could not fail to be better adapted to the occasion and to your own frame of mind than any that I could send you.

[*Torn off.*]

TO JOHN JOHNSON, ESQ.

Weston, Jan. 21, 1791.

I know that you have already been catechized

* Private Correspondence.

by Lady Hesketh on the subject of your return hither, before the winter shall be over, and shall therefore only say, that, if you CAN come, we shall be happy to receive you. Remember also, that nothing can excuse the non-performance of a promise but absolute necessity! In the mean time, my faith in your veracity is such that I am persuaded you will suffer nothing less than necessity to prevent it. Were you not extremely pleasant to us, and just the sort of youth that suits us, we should neither of us have said half so much, or perhaps a word on the subject.

Yours, my dear Johnny, are vagaries that I shall never see practised by any other, and, whether you slap your ancle, or reel as if you were fuddled, or dance in the path before me, all is characteristic of yourself, and therefore to me delightful.* I have hinted to you indeed sometimes, that you should be cautious of indulging antic habits and singularities of all sorts, and young men in general have need enough of such admonition. But yours are a sort of fairy habits, such as might belong to Puck or Robin Goodfellow, and therefore, good as the advice is, I should be half sorry should you take it.

This allowance at least I give you. Continue to take your walks, if walks they may be called, exactly in their present fashion, till you have taken orders! Then indeed, forasmuch as a skipping, curvetting, bounding divine might be a spectacle

* These innocent peculiarities were in a less degree retained to the end of life by this truly amiable and interesting man.

not altogether seemly, I shall consent to your adoption of a more grave demeanour.

W. C.

TO SAMUEL ROSE, ESQ.

The Lodge, Feb. 5, 1791.

My dear Friend—My letters to you are all either petitionary, or in the style of acknowledgments and thanks, and such nearly in an alternate order. In my last, I loaded you with commissions, for the due discharge of which I am now to say, and say truly, how much I feel myself obliged to you; neither can I stop there, but must thank you likewise for new honours from Scotland, which have left me nothing to wish for from that country; for my list is now, I believe, graced with the subscription of all its learned bodies. I regret only that some of them arrived too late to do honour to my present publication of names. But there are those among them, and from Scotland too, that may give a useful hint perhaps to our own universities. Your very handsome present of Pope's Homer has arrived safe, notwithstanding an accident that befel him by the way. The Hall-servant brought the parcel from Olney, resting it on the pommel of the saddle, and his horse fell with him. Pope was in consequence rolled in the dirt, but being well coated got no damage. If augurs and soothsayers were not out of fashion, I should have consulted one or two of that order, in hope of learning from them

that this fall was ominous. I have found a place for him in the parlour, where he makes a splendid appearance, and where he shall not long want a neighbour, one, who, if less popular than himself, shall at least look as big as he. How has it happened that, since Pope did certainly dedicate both Iliad and Odyssey, no dedication is found in this first edition of them?

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

Weston, Feb.. 13, 1791.

I now send you a full and true account of this business. Having learned that your inn at Woburn was the George, we sent Samuel thither yesterday. Mr. Martin, master of the George, told him†

* * * *

W. C.

P.S. I cannot help adding a circumstance that will divert you. Martin, having learned from Sam whose servant he was, told him, that he had never seen Mr. Cowper, but he had heard him frequently spoken of by the companies that had called at his house; and therefore, when Sam would have paid for his breakfast, would take nothing from him.

† This letter contained the history of a servant's cruelty to a post-horse, which a reader of humanity could not wish to see in print. But the postscript describes so pleasantly the signal influence of a poet's reputation on the spirit of a liberal innkeeper, that it surely ought not to be suppressed.—*Hayley.*

Who says that fame is only empty breath? On the contrary, it is good ale, and cold beef into the bargain.

TO THE REV. WALTER BAGOT.

Weston Underwood, Feb. 26, 1791.

My dear Friend—

It is a maxim of much weight,
Worth conning o'er and o'er,
He who has Homer to translate,
Had need do nothing more.

But, notwithstanding the truth and importance of this apophthegm, to which I lay claim as the original author of it, it is not equally true that my application to Homer, close as it is, has been the sole cause of my delay to answer you. No. In observing so long a silence I have been influenced much more by a vindictive purpose, a purpose to punish you for your suspicion that I could possibly feel myself hurt or offended by any critical suggestion of yours, that seemed to reflect on the purity of my nonsense verses. Understand, if you please, for the future, that, whether I disport myself in Greek or Latin, or in whatsoever other language, you are hereby, henceforth and for ever, entitled and warranted to take any liberties with it to which you shall feel yourself inclined, not excepting even the lines themselves, which stand at the head of this letter!

You delight me when you call *blank* verse the English *heroic;* for I have always thought, and often said, that we have no other verse worthy to be so entitled. When you read my preface, you will be made acquainted with my sentiments on this subject pretty much at large, for which reason I will curb my zeal, and say the less about it at present. That Johnson, who wrote harmoniously in rhyme, should have had so defective an ear as never to have discovered any music at all in blank verse, till he heard a particular friend of his reading it, is a wonder never sufficiently to be wondered at. Yet this is true on his own acknowledgment, and amounts to a plain confession, (of which perhaps he was not aware when he made it,) that he did not know how to read blank verse himself. In short, he either suffered prejudice to lead him in a string whithersoever it would, or his taste in poetry was worth little. I don't believe he ever read any thing of that kind with enthusiasm in his life; and as good poetry cannot be composed without a considerable share of that quality in the mind of the author, so neither can it be read or tasted as it ought to be without it.

I have said all this in the morning fasting, but am soon going to my tea. When therefore I shall have told you that we are now, in the course of our printing, in the second book of the Odyssey, I shall only have time to add that I am, my dear friend,

Most truly yours,

W. C.

I think your Latin quotations very applicable to

the present state of France. But France is in a situation new and untried before.

TO JOHN JOHNSON, ESQ.

Weston, Feb. 27, 1791.

Now, my dearest Johnny, I must tell thee in few words how much I love and am obliged to thee for thy affectionate services.

My Cambridge honours are all to be ascribed to you, and to you only. Yet you are but a little man, and a little man, into the bargain, who have kicked the mathematics, their idol, out of your study. So important are the endings, which Providence frequently connects with small beginnings. Had you been here, I could have furnished you with much employment; for I have so dealt with your fair MS. in the course of my polishing and improving, that I have almost blotted out the whole. Such, however, as it is, I must now send it to the printer, and he must be content with it, for there is not time to make a fresh copy. We are now printing the second book of the Odyssey.

Should the Oxonians bestow none of their notice on me on this occasion, it will happen singularly enough that, as Pope received all his University honours in the subscription way from Oxford, and none at all from Cambridge, so I shall have received all mine from Cambridge, and none from Oxford. This is the more likely to be the case, because I understand that, on whatsoever occasion

either of those learned bodies thinks fit to move, the other always makes it a point to sit still, thus proving its superiority.

I shall send up your letter to Lady Hesketh in a day or two, knowing that the intelligence contained in it will afford her the greatest pleasure. Know, likewise, for your own gratification, that all the Scotch Universities have subscribed, none excepted.

We are all as well as usual; that is to say, as well as reasonable folks expect to be on the crazy side of this frail existence.

I rejoice that we shall so soon have you again at our fireside.

W. C.

TO MRS. KING.*

Weston, March 2, 1791.

My dear Friend—I am sick and ashamed of myself that I forgot my promise; but it is actually true that I did forget it. You, however, I did not forget; nor did I forget to wonder and to be alarmed at your silence, being perfectly unconscious of my arrears. All this, together with various other trespasses of mine, must be set down to the account of Homer; and wherever he is, he is bound to make his apology to all my correspondents, but to you in particular. True it is that, if Mrs. Unwin did not call me from that pursuit, I should for-

* Private Correspondence.

get, in the ardour with which I persevere in both to eat and to drink and to retire to rest. T zeal has increased in me regularly as I have p ceeded, and in an exact ratio, as a mathematic would say, to the progress I have made toward point at which I have been aiming. You will beli this, when I tell you that, not contented with previous labours, I have actually revised the wh work, and have made a thousand alterations in since it has been in the press. I have now, h ever, tolerably well satisfied myself at least, trust that the printer and I shall trundle al merrily to the conclusion. I expect to correct proof-sheets of the third book of the Odyssey day.

Thus it is, as I believe I have said to you befc that you are doomed to hear of nothing but Hon from me. There is less of gallantry than of nat in this proceeding. When I write to you, I th of nothing but the subject that is uppermost, that uppermost is always Homer. Then I consi that though, as a lady, you have a right to exp other treatment at my hands, you are a lady w has a husband, and that husband an old schoolfell of mine, and who, I know, interests himself my success.

I am likely, after all, to gather a better harv of subscribers at Cambridge than I expected. little cousin of mine, an under-graduate of Ca College, suggested to me, when he was here in t summer, that it might not be amiss to advertise t work at Merril's the bookseller. I acquiesced

the measure, and at his return he pasted me on a board, and hung me up in the shop, as it has proved in the event, much to my emolument. For many, as I understand, have subscribed in consequence, and among the rest several of the College libraries.

I am glad that you have seen the last Northampton dirge, for the rogue of a clerk sent me only half the number of printed copies for which I stipulated with him at first, and they were all expended immediately. The poor man himself is dead now; and whether his successor will continue me in my office, or seek another laureat, has not yet transpired.

I am, dear Madam,

Affectionately yours,

W. C.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

Weston, March 6, 1791.

After all this ploughing and sowing on the plains of Troy, once fruitful, such at least to my translating predecessor, some harvest, I hope, will arise for me also. My long work has received its last, last touches; and I am now giving my preface its final adjustment. We are in the fourth Odyssey in the course of our printing, and I expect that I and the swallows shall appear tegether. They have slept all the winter, but I, on the contrary, have been extremely busy. Yet if I can "*virûm volitare*

per ora," as swiftly as they through the air, I shall account myself well requited.

Adieu!

W. C.

The Rev. James Hurdis, to whom the next letter is addressed, was formerly Professor of Poetry in the university of Oxford, and considered to have established his claim to the title of poet, by his popular work, "The Village Curate." But there is an observation which has frequently suggested itself to us, in recording the names of writers in the correspondence of Cowper, how few have acquired more than an ephemeral celebrity, and been transmitted to the present day! Authors resemble the waves of the sea, which pass on in quick succession, and engage the eye, till it is diverted by those which follow. Each in its turn yields to a superior impelling force. Some tower above the rest, and yet all, by their collective strength and energy, form one grand and mighty expanse of ocean.

Such are the vicissitudes of literature, the effects of competition, and the appetite for novelty, that few productions outlive the generation in which they are written, unless they bear a certain impress of immortality, a character of moral or intellectual superiority. They then survive to every age, and are the property of every country, so long as taste, genius, or religion preserve their empire over mankind.

Cowper, having received an obliging letter from

Mr. Hurdis, though not personally acquainted with him, addressed the following reply.

Weston, March 6, 1791.*

Sir—I have always entertained, and have occasionally avowed, a great degree of respect for the abilities of the unknown author of "The Village Curate,"—unknown at that time, but now well known, and not to me only, but to many. For, before I was favoured with your obliging letter, I knew your name, your place of abode, your profession, and that you had four sisters; all which I neither learned from our bookseller, nor from any of his connexions. You will perceive, therefore, that you are no longer an author *incognito*. The writer indeed of many passages that have fallen from your pen could not long continue so. Let genius, true genius, conceal itself where it may, we may say of it, as the young man in Terence of his beautiful mistress, "*Diu latere non potest.*"

I am obliged to you for your kind offers of service, and will not say that I shall not be troublesome to you hereafter; but at present I have no need to be so. I have within these two days given the very last stroke of my pen to my long translation, and what will be my next career I know not. At any rate we shall not, I hope, hereafter be known to each other as poets only, for your writings have made me ambitious of a nearer approach to you. Your door however will never be opened to me. My fate and fortune have combined with my natural

* Private Correspondence.

disposition to draw a circle round me, which I cannot pass; nor have I been more than thirteen miles from home these twenty years, and so far very seldom. But you are a younger man, and therefore may not be quite so immoveable; in which case should you choose at any time to move Westonward, you will always find me happy to receive you; and in the mean time I remain, with much respect,

Your most obedient servant, critic, and friend,

W. C.

P. S.—I wish to know what you mean to do with "Sir Thomas."* For, though I expressed doubts about his theatrical possibilities, I think him a very respectable person, and, with some improvement, well worthy of being introduced to the public.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

Weston, March 10, 1791.

Give my affectionate remembrances to your sisters, and tell them I am impatient to entertain them with my old story new dressed.

I have two French prints hanging in my study, both on Iliad subjects; and I have an English one in the parlour, on a subject from the same poem. In one of the former, Agamemnon addresses Achilles exactly in the attitude of a dancing-master turning miss in a minuet: in the latter, the figures are plain, and the attitudes plain also. This is, in some considerable measure, I believe, the difference between

* "Sir Thomas More," a tragedy.

my translation and Pope's; and will serve as an exemplification of what I am going to lay before you and the public.

W. C.

TO THE REV. WALTER BAGOT.

Weston, March 18, 1791.

My dear Friend—I give you joy that you are about to receive some more of my elegant prose, and I feel myself in danger of attempting to make it even more elegant than usual, and thereby of spoiling it, under the influence of your commendations. But my old helter-skelter manner has already succeeded so well, that I will not, even for the sake of entitling myself to a still greater portion of your praise, abandon it.

I did not call in question Johnson's true spirit of poetry, because he was not qualified to relish blank verse, (though, to tell you the truth, I think that but an ugly symptom,) but, if I did not express it, I meant however to infer it, from the perverse judgment that he has formed of our poets in general; depreciating some of the best, and making honourable mention of others, in my opinion, not undeservedly neglected. I will lay you sixpence that, had he lived in the days of Milton, and by any accident had met with his "Paradise Lost," he would neither have directed the attention of others to it, nor have much admired it himself. Good sense, in short, and strength of intellect, seem to me, rather than a fine

taste, to have been his distinguishing characteristics. But should you think otherwise, you have my free permission; for, so long as you have yourself a taste for the beauties of Cowper, I care not a fig whether Johnson had a taste or not.

I wonder where you find all your quotations, pat as they are to the present condition of France. Do you make them yourself, or do you actually find them? I am apt to suspect sometimes that you impose them only on a poor man who has but twenty books in the world, and two of them are your brother Chester's. They are, however, much to the purpose, be the author of them who he may.

I was very sorry to learn lately, that my friend at Chichely has been some time indisposed, either with gout or rheumàtism, (for it seems to be uncertain which,) and attended by Dr. Kerr. I am at a loss to conceive how so temperate a man should acquire the gout, and am resolved therefore to conclude that it must be the rheumatism, which, bad as it is, is in my judgment the best of the two, and will afford me, besides, some opportunity to sympathize with him, for I am not perfectly exempt from it myself. Distant as you are in situation, you are yet, perhaps, nearer to him in point of intelligence than I, and if you can send me any particular news of him, pray do it in your next.

I love and thank you for your benediction. If God forgive me my sins, surely I shall love him much, for I have much to be forgiven. But the quantum need not discourage me, since there is One whose atonement can suffice for all.

Τῶ δὲ καθ' ἅιμα ῥέεν, καὶ σοὶ, καὶ ἐμοὶ, καὶ 'αδέλφοις
'Ημετέροις, ἀντῶ σωζομένοις θανάτῳ.

Accept our joint remembrances, and believe me affectionately yours,

W. C.

TO JOHN JOHNSON, ESQ.

Weston, March, 19, 1791.

My dearest Johnny—You ask, if it may not be improper to solicit Lady Hesketh's subscription to the poems of the Norwich maiden? To which I reply, it will be by no means improper. On the contrary, I am persuaded that she will give her name with a very good will: for she is much an admirer of poesy that is worthy to be admired, and such I think, judging by the specimen, the poesy of this maiden, Elizabeth Bentley of Norwich, is likely to prove.

Not that I am myself inclined to expect in general great matters in the poetical way from persons whose ill-fortune it has been to want the common advantages of education: neither do I account it in general a kindness to such to encourage them in the indulgence of a propensity more likely to do them harm in the end, than to advance their interest. Many such phenomena have arisen within my remembrance, at which all the world has wondered for a season, and has then forgot them.*

* See a similar instance, recorded in the Memoirs of Mrs. Hannah More, of the Bristol milk-woman, Mrs. Yearsley.

The fact is, that though strong natural genius is always accompanied with strong natural tendency to its object, yet it often happens that the tendency is found where the genius is wanting. In the present instance, however, (the poems of a certain Mrs. Leapor excepted, who published some forty years ago,) I discern, I think, more marks of true poetical talent than I remember to have observed in the verses of any other male or female, so disadvantageously circumstanced. I wish her therefore good speed, and subscribe to her with all my heart.

You will rejoice when I tell you, that I have some hopes, after all, of a harvest from Oxford also; Mr. Throckmorton has written to a person of considerable influence there, which he has desired him to exert in my favour, and *his* request, I should imagine, will hardly prove a vain one.

Adieu,
W. C.

TO SAMUEL ROSE, ESQ.

Weston, March 24, 1791.

My dear Friend—You apologize for your silence in a manner which affords me so much pleasure, that I cannot but be satisfied. Let business be the cause, and I am contented. That is a cause to which I would even be accessary myself, and would increase yours by any means, except by a law-suit of my own, at the expense of all your opportunities of writing oftener than thrice in a twelvemonth.

Your application to Dr. Dunbar reminds me of two lines to be found somewhere in Dr. Young—

> "And now a poet's gratitude you see,
> Grant him two favours, and he'll ask for three."

In this particular, therefore, I perceive, that a poet and a poet's friend bear a striking resemblance to each other. The Doctor will bless himself that the number of Scotch universities is not larger, assured that if they equalled those in England in number of colleges, you would give him no rest till he had engaged them all. It is true, as Lady Hesketh told you, that I shall not fear, in the matter of subscriptions, a comparison even with Pope himself; considered (I mean) that we live in days of terrible taxation, and when verse, not being a necessary of life, is accounted dear, be it what it may, even at the lowest price. I am no very good arithmetician, yet I calculated the other day in my morning walk, that my two volumes, at the price of three guineas, will cost the purchaser less than the seventh part of a farthing per line. Yet there are lines among them, that have cost me the labour of hours, and none that have not cost me some labour.

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

Friday-night, March 25, 1791.

My dear Coz.—Johnson writes me word, that he has repeatedly called on Horace Walpole, and has never found him at home. He has also written to

him and received no answer. I charge thee therefore on thy allegiance, that thou move not a finger more in this business. My back is up, and I cannot bear the thought of wooing him any farther, nor would do it, though he were as *pig* a gentleman (look you !) as Lucifer himself. I have Welsh blood in me, if the pedigree of the Donnes say true, and every drop of it says—" Let him alone !"

I should have dined at the Hall to day, having engaged myself to do so. But an untoward occurrence, that happened last night or rather this morning, prevented me. It was a thundering rap at the door, just after the clock struck three. First, I thought the house was on fire. Then I thought the Hall was on fire. Then I thought it was a house-breaker's trick. Then I thought it was an express. In any case I thought, that if it should be repeated, it would awaken and terrify Mrs. Unwin, and kill her with spasms. The consequence of all these thoughts was the worst nervous fever I ever had in my life, although it was the shortest. The rap was given but once, though a multifarious one. Had I heard a second, I should have risen myself at all adventures. It was the only minute since you went, in which I have been glad that you were not here. Soon after I came down, I learned that a drunken party had passed through the village at that time, and they were, no doubt, the authors of this witty but troublesome invention.

Our thanks are due to you for the book you sent us. Mrs. Unwin has read to me several parts of it, which I have much admired. The observations are

shrewd and pointed; and there is much wit in the similes and illustrations. Yet a remark struck me, which I could not help making *vivâ voce* on the occasion. If the book has any real value, and does in truth deserve the notice taken of it by those to whom it is addressed, its claim is founded neither on the expression, nor on the style, nor on the wit of it, but altogether on the truth that it contains. Now the same truths are delivered, to my knowledge, perpetually from the pulpit by ministers, whom the admirers of this writer would disdain to hear. Yet the truth is not the less important for not being accompanied and recommended by brilliant thoughts and expressions; neither is God, from whom comes all truth, any more a respecter of wit than he is of persons. It will appear soon whether they applaud the book for the sake of its unanswerable arguments, or only tolerate the argument for the sake of the splendid manner in which it is enforced. I wish as heartily that it may do them good as if I were myself the author of it. But, alas! my wishes and hopes are much at variance. It will be the talk of the day, as another publication of the same kind has been; and then the noise of vanity-fair will drown the voice of the preacher.

I am glad to learn that the Chancellor does not forget me, though more for his sake than my own: for I see not how he can ever serve a man like me.

Adieu, my dearest Coz.

W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.*

Weston, March 29, 1791.

My dear Friend—It affords me sincere pleasure that you enjoy serenity of mind after your great loss. It is well in all circumstances, even in the most afflictive, with those who have God for their comforter. You do me justice in giving entire credit to my expressions of friendship for you. No day passes in which I do not look back to the days that are fled; and, consequently none in which I do not feel myself affectionately reminded of you and of her whom you have lost for a season. I cannot even see Olney spire from any of the fields in the neighbourhood, much less can I enter the town, and still less the vicarage, without experiencing the force of those mementoes, and recollecting a multitude of passages to which you and yours were parties.

The past would appear a dream were the remembrance of it less affecting. It was in the most important respects so unlike my present moments that I am sometimes almost tempted to suppose it a dream. But the difference between dreams and realities long since elapsed seems to consist chiefly in this—that a dream, however painful or pleasant at the time, and perhaps for a few ensuing hours, passes like an arrow through the air, leaving no trace of its flight behind it; but our actual experiences make a lasting impression. We review those which interested us much when they occurred, with

* Private Correspondence.

hardly less interest than in the first instance; and whether few years or many have intervened, our sensibility makes them still present, such a mere nullity is time to a creature to whom God gives a feeling heart and the faculty of recollection.

That you have not the first sight and sometimes, perhaps, have a late one of what I write, is owing merely to your distant situation. Some things I have written not worth your perusal; and a few, a very few, of such length that, engaged as I have been to Homer, it has not been possible that I should find opportunity to transcribe them. At the same time, Mrs. Unwin's pain in her side has almost forbidden her the use of the pen. She cannot use it long without increasing that pain; for which reason I am more unwilling than herself that she should ever meddle with it. But, whether what I write be a trifle, or whether it be serious, you would certainly, were you present, see them all. Others get a sight of them, by being so, who would never otherwise see them; and I should hardly withhold them from you whose claim upon me is of so much older a date than theirs. It is not, indeed, with readiness and good-will that I give them to any body, for, if I live, I shall probably print them; and my friends, who are previously well acquainted with them will have the less reason to value the book in which they shall appear. A trifle can have nothing to recommend it but its novelty. I have spoken of giving copies; but, in fact, I have given none. They who have them made them; for, till my whole work shall have fairly passed the press, it will not leave me a

moment more than is necessarily due to my correspondents. Their number has of late increased upon me, by the addition of many of my maternal relations, who, having found me out about a year since, have behaved to me in the most affectionate manner, and have been singularly serviceable to me in the article of my subscription. Several of them are coming from Norfolk to visit me in the course of the summer.

I enclose a copy of my last mortuary verses. The clerk for whom they were written is since dead; and whether his successor, the late sexton, will choose to be his own dirge-maker, or will employ me, is a piece of important news which has not yet reached me.

Our best remembrances attend yourself and Miss Catlett, and we rejoice in the kind Providence that has given you in her so amiable and comfortable a companion. Adieu, my dear friend!

I am sincerely yours,

W. C.

TO MRS. THROCKMORTON.

Weston, April 1, 1791.

My dear Mrs. Frog—A word or two before breakfast; which is all that I shall have time to send you! You have not, I hope, forgot to tell Mr. Frog how much I am obliged to him for his kind though unsuccessful attempt in my favour at Oxford. It seems not a little extraordinary that persons so nobly patronised themselves on the score of lite-

rature should resolve to give no encouragement to it in return. Should I find a fair opportunity to thank them hereafter I will not neglect it.

> Could Homer come himself, distress'd and poor,
> And tune his harp at Rhedicina's door,
> The rich old vixen would exclaim, (I fear,)
> "Begone! no tramper gets a farthing here."

I have read your husband's pamphlet through and through. You may think perhaps, and so may he, that a question so remote from all concern of mine could not interest me; but if you think so, you are both mistaken. He can write nothing that will not interest me: in the first place, for the writer's sake, and in the next place, because he writes better and reasons better than any body; with more candour, and with more sufficiency, and, consequently, with more satisfaction to all his readers, save only his opponents. They, I think, by this time wish that they had let him alone.

Tom is delighted past measure with his wooden nag, and gallops at a rate that would kill any horse that had a life to lose.

Adieu!

W. C.

TO JOHN JOHNSON, ESQ.

Weston, April 6, 1791.

My dear Johnny—A thousand thanks for your splendid assemblage of Cambridge luminaries! If

you are not contented with your collection, it can only be because you are unreasonable; for I, who may be supposed more covetous on this occasion than any body, am highly satisfied and even delighted with it. If indeed you should find it practicable to add still to the number, I have not the least objection. But this charge I give you,

Ἄλλο δὲ τοι ἐρέω, σὺ δ' ἐνὶ φρεσὶ βάλλεο σῇσι.

Stay not an hour beyond the time you have mentioned, even though you should be able to add a thousand names by doing so! For I cannot afford to purchase them at that cost. I long to see you, and so do we both, and will not suffer you to postpone your visit for any such consideration. No, my dear boy! In the affair of subscriptions, we are already illustrious enough, shall be so at least, when you shall have enlisted a college or two more; which, perhaps, you may be able to do in the course of the ensuing week. I feel myself much obliged to your university, and much disposed to admire the liberality of spirit they have shown on this occasion. Certainly I had not deserved much favour at their hands, all things considered. But the cause of literature seems to have some weight with them, and to have superseded the resentment they might be supposed to entertain, on the score of certain censures that you wot of. It is not so at Oxford.

W. C.

TO SAMUEL ROSE, ESQ.

Weston, April 29, 1791.

My dear Friend—I forget if I told you that Mr. Throckmorton had applied through the medium of —— to the university of Oxford. He did so, but without success. Their answer was, "that they subscribe to nothing."

Pope's subscriptions did not amount, I think, to six hundred; and mine will not fall very short of five. Noble doings, at a time of day when Homer has no news to tell us, and when, all other comforts of life having risen in price, poetry has of course fallen. I call it a "comfort of life:" it is so to others, but to myself it is become even a necessary.

The holiday times are very unfavourable to the printer's progress. He and all his demons are making themselves merry and me sad, for I mourn at every hindrance.

W. C.

TO THE REV. WALTER BAGOT.

Weston, May 2, 1791.

My dear Friend—Monday being a day in which Homer has now no demands upon me, I shall give part of the present Monday to you. But it this moment occurs to me that the proposition with which I begin will be obscure to you, unless followed by an explanation. You are to understand,

therefore, that Monday being no post-day, I have consequently no proof-sheets to correct, the correction of which is nearly all that I have to do with Homer at present, I say nearly all, because I am likewise occasionally employed in reading over the whole of what is already printed, that I may make a table of errata to each of the poems. How much is already printed? say you: I answer—the whole Iliad, and almost seventeen books of the Odyssey.

About a fortnight since, perhaps three weeks, I had a visit from your nephew, Mr. Bagot, and his tutor Mr. Hurlock, who came hither under conduct of your niece, Miss Barbara. So were the friends of Ulysses conducted to the palace of Antiphates the Læstrigonian by that monarch's daughter. But mine is no palace, neither am I a giant, neither did I devour any one of the party—on the contrary, I gave them chocolate and permitted them to depart in peace. I was much pleased both with the young man and his tutor. In the countenance of the former I saw much Bagotism, and not less in his manners. I will leave you to guess what I mean by that expression. Physiognomy is a study of which I have almost as high an opinion as Lavater himself, the professor of it, and for this good reason, because it never yet deceived me. But perhaps I shall speak more truly if I say, that I am somewhat of an adept in the art, although I have *never studied* it; for, whether I will or not, I judge of every human creature by the countenance, and, as I say, have never yet seen reason to repent of my judgment.

Sometimes I feel myself powerfully attracted, as I was by your nephew, and sometimes with equal vehemence repulsed, which attraction and repulsion have always been justified in the sequel.

I have lately read, and with more attention than I ever gave to them before, Milton's Latin poems. But these I must make the subject of some future letter, in which it will be ten to one that your friend Samuel Johnson gets another slap or two at the hands of your humble servant. Pray read them yourself, and with as much attention as I did; then read the Doctor's remarks if you have them, and then tell me what you think of both.* It will be pretty sport for you on such a day as this, which is the fourth that we have had of almost incessant rain. The weather, and a cold, the effect of it, have confined me ever since last Thursday. Mrs. Unwin however is well, and joins me in every good wish to yourself and family. I am, my good friend,

Most truly yours,

W. C.

* Johnson's remark on Milton's Latin poems is as follows: "The Latin pieces are lusciously elegant; but the delight which they afford is rather by the exquisite imitation of the ancient writers, by the purity of the diction and the harmony of the numbers, than by any power of invention or vigour of sentiment. They are not all of equal value; the elegies excel the odes; and some of the exercises on gunpowder treason might have been spared."

He, however, quotes with approbation the remark of Hampton, the translator of Polybius, that "Milton was the first Englishman who, after the revival of letters, wrote Latin verses with classic elegance"—*See Johnson's Life of Milton.*

TO THE REV. MR. BUCHANAN.

Weston, May 11, 1791.

My dear Sir—You have sent me a beautiful poem, wanting nothing but metre. I would to heaven that you could give it that requisite yourself; for he who could make the sketch cannot but be well qualified to finish. But, if you will not, I will; provided always, nevertheless, that God gives me ability, for it will require no common share to do justice to your conceptions.*

I am much yours,

W. C.

Your little messenger vanished before I could catch him.

TO LADY HESKETH.

The Lodge, May 18, 1791.

My dearest Coz.—Has another of my letters fallen short of its destination; or wherefore is it, that thou writest not? One letter in five weeks is a poor allowance for your friends at Weston. One, that I received two or three days since from Mrs.

* We are indebted to Mr. Buchanan for having suggested to Cowper the outline of the poem called "The Four Ages," viz. infancy, youth, middle age, and old age. The writer was acquainted with this respectable clergyman in his declining years. He was considered to be a man of cultivated mind and taste.

Frog, has not at all enlightened me on this head. But I wander in a wilderness of vain conjecture.

I have had a letter lately from New York, from a Dr. Cogswell of that place, to thank me for my fine verses, and to tell me, which pleased me particularly, that, after having read "The Task," my first volume fell into his hands, which he read also, and was equally pleased with. This is the only instance I can recollect of a reader doing justice to my first effusions: for I am sure, that in point of expression they do not fall a jot below my second, and that in point of subject they are for the most part superior. But enough, and too much of this. "The Task" he tells me has been reprinted in that city.

Adieu! my dearest Coz.

We have blooming scenes under wintry skies, and with icy blasts to fan them.

Ever thine,
W. C.

TO JOHN JOHNSON, ESQ.

Weston, May 23, 1791.

My dearest Johnny—Did I not know that you are never more in your element than when you are exerting yourself in my cause, I should congratulate you on the hope there seems to be that your labour will soon have an end.*

You will wonder, perhaps, my Johnny, that Mrs.

* The labour of transcribing Cowper's version.

Unwin, by my desire, enjoined you to secrecy concerning the translation of the Frogs and Mice.* Wonderful it may well seem to you, that I should wish to hide for a short time from a few what I am just going to publish to all. But I had more reasons than one for this mysterious management; that is to say, I had two. In the first place, I wished to surprise my readers agreeably; and secondly, I wished to allow none of my friends an opportunity to object to the measure, who might think it perhaps a measure more bountiful than prudent. But I have had my sufficient reward, though not a pecuniary one. It is a poem of much humour, and accordingly I found the translation of it very amusing. It struck me too, that I must either make it part of the present publication, or never publish it at all; it would have been so terribly out of its place in any other volume.

I long for the time that shall bring you once more to Weston, and all your *et ceteras* with you. Oh! what a month of May has this been! Let never poet, English poet at least, give himself to the praises of May again.

W. C.

We add the verses that he composed on this occasion.

* See his version of Homer.

THE JUDGMENT OF THE POETS.

Two nymphs,* both nearly of an age,
Of numerous charms possess'd,
A warm dispute once chanc'd to wage,
Whose temper was the best.

The worth of each had been complete,
Had both alike been mild;
But one, although her smile was sweet,
Frown'd oft'ner than she smil'd.

And in her humour, when she frown'd,
Would raise her voice and roar;
And shake with fury to the ground,
The garland that she wore.

The other was of gentler cast,
From all such frenzy clear;
Her frowns were never known to last,
And never prov'd severe.

To poets of renown in song,
The nymphs referr'd the cause,
Who, strange to tell! all judg'd it wrong,
And gave misplac'd applause.

They gentle call'd, and kind, and soft,
The flippant and the scold;
And, though she chang'd her mood so oft,
That failing left untold.

No judges sure were e'er so mad,
Or so resolv'd to err;
In short, the charms her sister had,
They lavish'd all on her.

* May and June.

Then thus the god, whom fondly they
Their great inspirer call,
Was heard one genial summer's day,
To reprimand them all:

"Since thus ye have combin'd," he said,
"My fav'rite nymph to slight,
Adorning May, that peevish maid!
With June's undoubted right;

The minx shall, for your folly's sake,
Still prove herself a shrew;
Shall make your scribbling fingers ache,
And pinch your noses blue."

TO LADY HESKETH.

The Lodge, May 27, 1791.

My dearest Coz.—I, who am neither dead, n sick, nor idle, should have no excuse, were I as tar in answering as you in writing I live inde where leisure abounds, and you where leisure not; a difference that accounts sufficiently both f your silence and my loquacity.

When you told Mrs. —— that my Homer wou come forth in May, you told her what you believe and therefore no falsehood. But you told her the same time what will not happen, and therefc not a truth. There is a medium between tru and falsehood; and I believe the word mistake e presses it exactly. I will therefore say that y were mistaken. If instead of May you had me tioned June, I flatter myself that you would ha hit the mark. For in June there is every prol

bility that we shall publish. You will say, "Hang the printer!—for it is his fault!" But stay, my dear, hang him not just now! For to execute him and find another will cost us time, and so much too, that I question if, in that case, we should publish sooner than in August. To say truth, I am not perfectly sure that there will be any necessity to hang him at all; though that is a matter which I desire to leave entirely at your discretion, alleging only, in the mean time, that the man does not appear to me during the last half-year to have been at all in fault. His remittance of sheets in all that time has been punctual, save and except while the Easter holidays lasted, when I suppose he found it impossible to keep his devils to their business. I shall however receive the last sheet of the Odyssey to-morrow, and have already sent up the Preface, together with all the needful. You see, therefore, that the publication of this famous work cannot be delayed much longer.

As for politics, I reck not, having no room in my head for any thing but the Slave bill. That is lost; and all the rest is a trifle. I have not seen Paine's book,* but refused to see it, when it was offered to me. No man shall convince me that I am improperly governed, while I feel the contrary.

Adieu!

W. C.

* The "Rights of Man," a book which created a great ferment in the country, by its revolutionary character and statements.

TO JOHN JOHNSON, ESQ.

Weston, June 1, 1791.

My dearest Johnny—Now you may rest. Now I can give you joy of the period, of which I gave you hope in my last; the period of all your labours in my service.* But this I can foretell you also, that, if you persevere in serving your friends at this rate, your life is likely to be a life of labour. Yet persevere! Your rest will be the sweeter hereafter! In the mean time I wish you, if at any time you should find occasion for him, just such a friend as you have proved to me!

W. C.

* As a transcriber.

Part the Third.

HAVING now arrived at that period in the history of Cowper, when he had brought to a close his great and laborious undertaking, his version of Homer, we suspend for a moment the progress of the Correspondence, to afford room for a few observations.

We have seen in many of the preceding letters, with what ardour of application and liveliness of hope he devoted himself to this favourite project of enriching the literature of his country with an English Homer, that might justly be esteemed a faithful yet free translation; a genuine and graceful representative of the justly admired original.

After five years of intense labour, from which nothing could withhold him, except the pressure of that unhappy malady which retarded his exertions for several months, he published his complete version in two quarto volumes, on the first of July, 1791, having inscribed the Iliad to his young noble kinsman, Earl Cowper, and the Odyssey to the dowager Countess Spencer—a lady for whose virtues he had long entertained a most cordial and affectionate veneration.

He had exerted no common powers of genius and of industry in this great enterprise; yet, we lament to say, he failed in satisfying the expectations of the public. Hayley assigns a reason for this failure, which we give in his own words. "Homer," he observes, "is so exquisitely beautiful in his own language, and he has been so long an idol in every literary mind, that any copy of him, which the best of modern poets can execute, must probably resemble in its effect the portrait of a graceful woman, painted by an excellent artist for her lover: the lover indeed will acknowledge great merit in the work, and think himself much indebted to the skill of such an artist, but he will never admit, as in truth he never can feel, that the best of resemblances exhibits all the grace that he discerns in the beloved original."

This illustration is ingenious and amusing, but we doubt its justness; because the painter may produce a correct and even a flattering likeness of the lover's mistress, though it is true that the lover himself will think otherwise. But where is the translator that can do justice to the merits of Homer? Who can exhibit his majestic simplicity, his sententious force, the lofty grandeur of his conceptions, and the sweet charm of his imagery, embellished with all the graces of a language never surpassed either in harmony or richness? The two competitors, who are alone entitled to be contrasted with each other, are Pope and Cowper. We pass over Ogilby, Chapman, and others. It is Hector alone that is worthy to contend with Achilles. To the

ı of Pope must be allowed the praise of me-
: numbers, richness of poetic diction, splen-
f imagery, and brilliancy of effect; but these
are acquired at the expense of fidelity and
ıs of interpretation. The simplicity of the
ages is exchanged for the refinement of
n taste, and Homer sinks under the weight of
ents not his own. Where Pope fails, Cow-
ıcceeds; but, on the other hand, where Pope
ıds, Cowper seems to fail. Cowper is more
l, but less rich and spirited. He is singularly
ıt from the defects attributable to Pope.
is nothing extraneous, no meretricious or-
ıt, no laboured elegance, nothing added, no-
omitted. The integrity of the text is invio-
preserved. But though it is in the page of
er that we must seek for the true interpreta-
f Homer's meaning—though there are many
ges distinguished by much grace and beauty—
n the whole, the lofty spirit, the bright glow
ling, the "thoughts that breathe, the words
urn," are not sufficiently sustained. Each of
distinguished writers, to a certain extent, has
, not from any want of genius, but because
ete success is difficult, if not unattainable.
ıauses may perhaps be assigned for this fail-
first, no copy can equal the original, if the
al be the production of a master artist. The
who seeks to transfuse into his own page the
ing and spirit of an author, endowed with ex-
linary powers, resembles the chemist in his
ıtory, who, in endeavouring to condense the

properties of different substances, and to extract their essence, has the misfortune to see a great portion of the volatile qualities evaporate in the process, and elude all the efforts of his philosophic art. Secondly, Homer still remains untranslated, because of all poets he is the most untranslateable. He seems to claim the lofty prerogative of standing alone, and of enjoying the solitary grandeur of his own unrivalled genius; allowing neither to rival nor to friend, to imitator nor to translator, the honours of participation; but exercising the exclusive right of interpreting the majestic simplicity of his own conceptions, in all the fervour of his own poetic fancy, and in the sweet melody of his own graceful and flowing numbers. He who wishes to understand and to appreciate Homer, must seek him in the charm and beauty of his own inimitable language.

As Cowper's versions of the Iliad and Odyssey have formed so prominent a feature in his correspondence, for five successive years, we think it may be interesting to subjoin a few specimens from each translator, restricting our quotations to the Iliad, as being the most familiar to the reader.

We extract passages, where poetic skill was most likely to be exerted.

> Like leaves on trees, the race of man is found,
> Now green in youth, now with'ring on the ground;
> Another race the following spring supplies;
> They fall successive, and successive rise:
> So generations in their course decay;
> So flourish these, when those are past away.
>
> *Pope's Version*, book vi. line 181.

For as the leaves, so springs the race of man.
Chill blasts shake down the leaves, and warm'd anew
By vernal airs the grove puts forth again:
Age after age, so man is born and dies.
Cowper's Version, book vi. line 164.

The interview between Hector and Andromache—

Yet come it will, the day decreed by fates;
(How my heart trembles while my tongue relates!)
The day when thou, imperial Troy, must bend,
And see thy warriors fall, thy glories end.
And yet no dire presage so wounds my mind,
My mother's death, the ruin of my kind,
Not Priam's hoary hairs defil'd with gore,
Not all my brothers gasping on the shore;
As thine, Andromache! thy griefs I dread.
I see thee trembling, weeping, captive led!
In Argive looms our battles to design,
And woes, of which so large a part was thine!
To bear the victor's hard commands, or bring
The weight of waters from Hyperia's spring.
There, while you groan beneath the load of life,
They cry, Behold the mighty Hector's wife!
Some haughty Greek, who lives thy tears to see,
Embitters all thy woes, by naming me.
The thoughts of glory past, and present shame,
A thousand griefs shall waken at the name!
May I lie cold before that dreadful day,
Press'd with a load of monumental clay!
Thy Hector, wrapt in everlasting sleep,
Shall neither hear thee sigh, nor see thee weep.
Pope's Version, book vi. line 570.

For my prophetic soul foresees a day
When Ilium, Ilium's people, and, himself,
Her warlike king, shall perish. But no grief
For Ilium, for her people, for the king

My warlike sire; nor even for the queen;
Nor for the num'rous and the valiant band,
My brothers, destin'd all to bite the ground,
So moves me as my grief for thee alone,
Doom'd then to follow some imperious Greek,
A weeping captive, to the distant shores
Of Argos; there to labour at the loom
For a task-mistress, and with many a sigh,
But heav'd in vain, to bear the pond'rous urn
From Hypereia's, or Messeïs' fount.
Fast flow thy tears the while, and as he eyes
That silent shower, some passing Greek shall say—
"This was the wife of Hector, who excell'd
All Troy in fight, when Ilium was besieg'd."
While thus he speaks thy tears shall flow afresh;
The guardian of thy freedom while he liv'd
For ever lost; but be my bones inhum'd,
A senseless store, or e'er thy parting cries
Shall pierce mine ear, and thou be dragg'd away.

Cowper's Version, book vi. line 501.

We add one more specimen, where the beauty of the imagery demands the exercise of poetic talent.

As when the moon, refulgent lamp of night,
O'er heaven's clear azure sheds her sacred light,
When not a breath disturbs the deep serene,
And not a cloud o'ercasts the solemn scene;
Around her throne the vivid planets roll,
And stars unnumber'd gild the glowing pole;
O'er the dark trees a yellower verdure shed,
And tip with silver ev'ry mountain's head,
Then shine the vales, the rocks in prospect rise,
A flood of glory bursts from all the skies.*

Book viii. line 687.

* There is a similar passage, in Mickle's "Lusiad," so full of beauty, that we cannot refrain from inserting it:—

As when around the clear bright moon, the stars
Shine in full splendour, and the winds are hush'd,
The groves, the mountain-tops, the headland heights,
Stand all apparent, not a vapour streaks
The boundless blue, but ether open'd wide
All glitters, and the shepherd's heart is cheer'd.
Book viii. line 637.

We leave the reader to form his own decision as to the relative merits of the two translations. Pope evidently produces effect by expanding the sentiments and imagery of his author; Cowper invariably adheres to the original text. That full justice may be rendered to him, it is necessary not merely to compare him with Pope but with his great original.

After these remarks we once more return to the correspondence of Cowper.

TO THE REV. MR. HURDIS.

Weston, June 13, 1791.

My dear Sir—I ought to have thanked you for your agreeable and entertaining letter much sooner, but I have many correspondents who will not be said nay; and have been obliged of late to give

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The moon full orb'd, forsakes her watery cave,
And lifts her lovely head above the wave;
The snowy splendours of her modest ray
Stream o'er the liquid wave, and glittering play:
The masts' tall shadows tremble in the deep;
The peaceful winds a holy silence keep;
The watchman's carol echoed from the prows,
Alone, at times, disturbs the calm repose.

my last attentions to Homer. The very last indeed, for yesterday I dispatched to town, after revising them carefully, the proof sheets of subscribers' names, among which I took special notice of yours, and am much obliged to you for it. We have contrived, or rather my bookseller and printer have contrived (for they have never waited a moment for me) to publish as critically at the wrong time, as if my whole interest and success had depended upon it. March, April, and May, said Johnson to me in a letter that I received from him in February, are the best months for publication. *Therefore* now it is determined that Homer shall come out on the first of July; that is to say, exactly at the moment when, except a few lawyers, not a creature will be left in town who will ever care one farthing about him. To which of these two friends of mine I am indebted for this management, I know not. It does not please, but I would be a philosopher as well as a poet, and therefore make no complaint, or grumble at all about it. You, I presume, have had dealings with them both—how did they manage for you? And, if as they have for me, how did you behave under it? Some who love me complain that I am too passive; and I should be glad of an opportunity to justify myself by your example. The fact is, should I thunder ever so loud, no efforts of that sort will avail me now; therefore, like a good economist of my bolts, I choose to reserve them for more profitable occasions.

I am glad to find that your amusements have been so similar to mine; for in this instance too I

seemed in need of somebody to keep me in countenance, especially in my attention and attachment to animals. All the notice that we lords of the creation vouchsafe to bestow on the creatures is generally to abuse them; it is well, therefore, that here and there a man should be found a little womanish, or perhaps a little childish, in this matter, who will make some amends, by kissing and coaxing and laying them in one's bosom. You remember the little ewe lamb, mentioned by the prophet Nathan; the prophet perhaps invented the tale for the sake of its application to David's conscience; but it is more probable that God inspired him with it for that purpose. If he did, it amounts to a proof, that he does not overlook, but, on the contrary, much notices such little partialities and kindnesses to his *dumb* creatures, as we, because we articulate, are pleased to call them.

Your sisters are fitter to judge than I, whether assembly-rooms are the places, of all others, in which the ladies may be studied to most advantage. I am an old fellow, but I had once my dancing days, as you have now, yet I could never find that I learned half so much of a woman's real character by dancing with her as by conversing with her at home, where I could observe her behaviour at the table, at the fire-side, and in all the trying circumstances of domestic life. We are all good when we are pleased, but she is the good woman who wants not a fiddle to sweeten her. If I am wrong, the young ladies will set me right; in the mean time I will not tease you with graver arguments

on the subject, especially as I have a hope, that years, and the study of the Scripture, and His Spirit whose word it is, will, in due time, bring you to my way of thinking. I am not one of those sages who require that young men should be as old as themselves before they have time to be so.

With my love to your fair sisters, I remain,

Dear Sir,

Most truly yours,

W. C.

TO SAMUEL ROSE, ESQ.

The Lodge, June 15, 1791.

My dear Friend—If it will afford you any comfort that you have a share in my affections, of that comfort you may avail yourself at all times. You have acquired it by means which, unless I should have become worthless myself to an uncommon degree, will always secure you from the loss of it. You are learning what all learn, though few at so early an age, that man is an ungrateful animal; and that benefits, too often, instead of securing a due return, operate rather as provocations to ill-treatment. This I take to be the *summum malum* of the human heart. Towards God we are all guilty of it more or less; but between man and man, we may thank God for it, there are some exceptions. He leaves this peccant principle to operate, in some degree against himself, in all, for our humiliation, I suppose; and because the pernicious effects of it

in reality cannot injure him, he cannot suffer by them; but he knows that, unless he should restrain its influence on the dealings of mankind with each other, the bonds of society would be dissolved, and all charitable intercourse at an end amongst us. It was said of Archbishop Cranmer, "Do him an ill turn, and you make him your *friend* for ever;" of others it may be said, "Do them a good one, and they will be for ever your *enemies*." It is the grace of God only that makes the difference.

The absence of Homer, (for we have now shaken hands and parted) is well supplied by three relations of mine from Norfolk—my cousin Johnson, an aunt of his,* and his sister.† I love them all dearly, and am well content to resign to them the place in my attentions, so lately occupied by the chiefs of Greece and Troy. His aunt and I have spent many a merry day together, when we were some forty years younger; and we make shift to be merry together still. His sister is a sweet young woman, graceful, good-natured, and gentle, just what I had imagined her to be before I had seen her.‡

Farewell,

W. C.

* Mrs. Bodham. † Mrs. Hewitt.

‡ Mrs. Hewitt fully merited this description. She departed a few years before her brother, the late Dr. Johnson. Their remains lie in the same vault, at Yaxham, near Dereham, Norfolk.

TO DR. JAMES COGSWELL, NEW YORK.

Weston-Underwood, near Olney, Bucks,
June 15, 1791.

Dear Sir—Your letter and obliging present from so great a distance deserved a speedier acknowledgment, and should not have wanted one so long, had not circumstances so fallen out since I received them as to make it impossible for me to write sooner. It is indeed within this day or two that I have heard how, by the help of my bookseller, I may transmit an answer to you.

My title-page, as it well might, misled you. It speaks me of the Inner-Temple, and so I am, but a member of that society only, not as an inhabitant. I live here almost at the distance of sixty miles from London, which I have not visited these eight-and-twenty years, and probably never shall again. Thus it fell out that Mr. Morewood had sailed again for America before your parcel reached me, nor should I (it is likely) have received it at all, had not a cousin of mine, who lives in the Temple, by good fortune received it first, and opened your letter; finding for whom it was intended, he transmitted to me both that and the parcel. Your testimony of approbation of what I have published, coming from another quarter of the globe, could not but be extremely flattering, as was your obliging notice that "The Task" had been reprinted in your city. Both volumes, I hope, have a tendency to

discountenance vice, and promote the best interests of mankind. But how far they shall be effectual to these invaluable purposes depends altogether on his blessing, whose truths I have endeavoured to inculcate. In the mean time I have sufficient proof, that readers may be pleased, may approve, and yet lay down the book unedified.

During the last five years I have been occupied with a work of a very different nature, a translation of the Iliad and Odyssey into blank verse, and the work is now ready for publication. I undertook it, partly because Pope's is too lax a version, which has lately occasioned the learned of this country to call aloud for a new one; and partly because I could fall on no better expedient to amuse a mind too much addicted to melancholy.

I send you, in return for the volumes with which you favoured me, three on religious subjects, popular productions that have not been long published, and that may not therefore yet have reached your country: "The Christian Officer's Panoply, by a marine officer"—"The Importance of the Manners of the Great," and "An Estimate of the Religion of the Fashionable World." The two last are said to be written by a lady, Miss Hannah More, and are universally read by people of that rank to which she addresses them. Your manners, I suppose, may be more pure than ours, yet it is not unlikely that even among you may be found some to whom her strictures are applicable. I return you my thanks, sir, for the volumes you sent me, two of

which I have read with pleasure, Mr. Edwards's† book, and the Conquest of Canaan. The rest I have not had time to read, except Dr. Dwight's Sermon, which pleased me almost more than any that I have either seen or heard.

I shall account a correspondence with you an honour, and remain, dear Sir,

Your obliged and obedient servant,

W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.*

Weston, June 24, 1791.

My dear Friend—Considering the multiplicity of your engagements, and the importance, no doubt, of most of them, I am bound to set the higher value on your letters, and, instead of grumbling that they come seldom, to be thankful to you that they come at all. You are now going into the country, where, I presume, you will have less to do, and I am rid of Homer. Let us try, therefore, if, in the interval between the present hour and the next busy season, (for I, too, if I live, shall probably be occupied again,) we can continue to exchange letters more frequently than for some time past.

You do justice to me and Mrs. Unwin, when you assure yourself that to hear of your health will give

† The celebrated American Edwards, well known for his two great works on "The Freedom of the Human Will," and on "Religious Affections." Dr. Dwight's Sermons are a body of sound and excellent theology.

* Private Correspondence.

is pleasure: I know not, in truth, whose health and well-being could give us more. The years that we have seen together will never be out of our remembrance; and, so long as we remember them, we must remember you with affection. In the pulpit, and out of the pulpit, you have laboured in every possible way to serve us; and we must have a short memory indeed for the kindness of a friend could we by any means become forgetful of yours. It would grieve me more than it does to hear you complain of the effects of time were not I also myself the subject of them. While he is wearing out you and other dear friends of mine he spares not me; for which I ought to account myself obliged to him, since I should otherwise be in danger of surviving all that I have ever loved—the most melancholy lot that can befal a mortal. God knows what will be my doom hereafter; but precious as life necessarily seems to a mind doubtful of its future happiness, I love not the world, I trust, so much as to wish a place in it when all my beloved shall have left it.

You speak of your late loss in a manner that affected me much; and when I read that part of your letter, I mourned with you and for you. But surely, I said to myself, no man had ever less reason to charge his conduct to a wife with any thing blame-worthy. Thoughts of that complexion, however, are no doubt extremely natural on the occasion of such a loss; and a man seems not to have valued sufficiently, when he possesses it no longer, what, while he possessed it, he valued more than life. I am mistaken too, or you can recollect a time when

you had fears, and such as became a Christian, of loving too much; and it is likely that you have even prayed to be preserved from doing so. I suggest this to you as a plea against those self-accusations, which I am satisfied that you do not deserve, and as an effectual answer to them all. You may do well too to consider, that had the deceased been the survivor she would have charged herself in the same manner, and, I am sure you will acknowledge, without any sufficient reason. The truth is, that you both loved at least as much as you ought, and, I dare say, had not a friend in the world who did not frequently observe it. To love just enough, and not a bit too much, is not for creatures who can do nothing well. If we fail in duties less arduous, how should we succeed in this, the most arduous of all?

I am glad to learn from yourself that you are about to quit a scene that probably keeps your tender recollections too much alive. Another place and other company may have their uses: and, while your church is undergoing repair, its minister may be repaired also.

As to Homer, I am sensible that, except as an amusement, he was never worth my meddling with; but, as an amusement, he was to me invaluable. As such he served me more than five years; and, in that respect, I know not where I shall find his equal. You oblige me by saying, that you will read him for my sake. I verily think that any person of a spiritual turn may read him to some advantage. He may suggest reflections that may not be unser-

:eable even in a sermon; for I know not where we n find more striking exemplars of the pride, the ·ogance, and the insignificance of man; at the ne time that, by ascribing all events to a divine :erposition, he inculcates constantly the belief of Providence; insists much on the duty of charity vards the poor and the stranger; on the respect it is due to superiors, and to our seniors in partilar; and on the expedience and necessity of ıyer and piety toward the gods, a piety mistaken, leed, in its object, but exemplary for the punclity of its performance. Thousands, who will t learn from Scripture to ask a blessing either on :ir actions or on their food, may learn it, if they ase, from Homer.

My Norfolk cousins are now with us. We are :h as well as usual; and with our affectionate re-:mbrances to Miss Catlett,

I remain, sincerely yours,

W. C.

We are indebted to the kindness of a friend for : following letter.

TO MRS. BODHAM, SOUTH GREEN, MATTISHALL, NORFOLK.

Weston Underwood, July 7, 1791.

My dearest Cousin—Most true it is, however ange, that on the 25th of last month I wrote you ong letter, and verily thought I had sent it: but,

opening my desk the day before yesterday, there I found it. Such a memory have I—a good one never, but at present worse than usual, my head being filled with the cares of publication,* and the bargain that I am making with my bookseller.

I am sorry that through this forgetfulness of mine you were disappointed, otherwise should not at all regret that my letter never reached you; for it consisted principally of such reasons as I could muster to induce you to consent to a favourite measure to which you have consented without them. Your kindness and self-denying disinterestedness on this occasion have endeared you to us all, if possible, still the more, and are truly worthy of the Rose † that used to sit smiling on my knee, I will not say how many years ago.

Make no apologies, my dear, that thou dost not write more frequently:—write when thou canst, and I shall be satisfied. I am sensible, as I believe I have already told you, that there is an awkwardness in writing to those with whom we have hardly ever conversed, in consideration of which I feel myself not at all inclined either to wonder at or to blame your silence. At the same time, be it known to you, that you must not take encouragement from this my great moderation, lest, disuse increasing the labour, you should at last write not at all.

That I should visit Norfolk at present is not pos-

* The publication of the translation of Homer.

† The name he gave to Mrs. Bodham when a child.

sible. I have heretofore pleaded my engagement to Homer as the reason, and a reason it was, while it subsisted, that was absolutely insurmountable. But there are still other impediments, which it would neither be pleasant to me to relate nor to you to know, and which could not well be comprised in a letter. Let it suffice for me to say that, could they be imparted, you would admit the force of them. It shall be our mutual consolation, that, if we cannot meet at Mattishall, at least we may meet at Weston, and that we shall meet here with double satisfaction, being now so numerous.

Your sister is well:—Kitty,* I think, better than when she came; and Johnny† ails nothing, except that if he eat a little more supper than usual, he is apt to be riotous in his sleep. We have an excellent physician at Northampton, whom our dear Catherine * wishes to consult, and I have recommended it to Johnny to consult him at the same time. His nocturnal ailment is, I dare say, within the reach of medical advice, and, because it may happen some time or other to be very hurtful to him, I heartily wish him cured of it. Light suppers and early rising perhaps might alone be effectual—but the latter is a difficulty that threatens not to be easily surmounted.

We are all of one mind respecting you; therefore I send the love of all, though I shall see none of the party till breakfast calls us together. Great prepa-

* Miss Johnson, afterwards Mrs. Hewitt.

† Dr. Johnson.

ration is making in the empty house. The spiders have no rest, and hardly a web is to be seen where lately there were thousands.

I am, my dearest cousin, with best respects to Mr. Bodham, most affectionately yours,

W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.*

Weston, July 22, 1791.

My dear Friend—I did not foresee, when I challenged you to a brisker correspondence, that a new engagement of all my leisure was at hand;—a new, and yet an old one. An interleaved copy of my Homer arrived soon after from Johnson, in which he recommended it to me to make any alterations that might yet be expedient with a view to another impression. The alterations that I make are indeed but few, and they are also short; not more, perhaps, than half a line in two thousand. But the lines are, I suppose, nearly forty thousand in all, and to revise them critically must consequently be a work of labour. I suspend it, however, for your sake, till the present sheet be filled, and that I may not seem to shrink from my own offer.

Mr. Bean has told me that he saw you at Bedford, and gave us your reasons for not coming our way. It is well, so far as your own comfortable lodging and our gratification were concerned, that you did not; for our house is brimful, as it has been all the

* Private Correspondence.

summer, with my relations from Norfolk. We should all have been mortified, both you and we, had you been obliged, as you must have been, to seek a residence elsewhere.

I am sorry that Mr. Venn's * labours below are so near to a conclusion. I have seen few men whom I could have loved more, had opportunity been given me to know him better. So, at least, I have thought as often as I have seen him. But when I saw him last, which is some years since, he appeared then so much broken that I could not have imagined he would last so long. Were I capable of envying, in the strict sense of the word, a good man, I should envy him, and Mr. Berridge, † and yourself, who have spent, and while they last, will continue to spend, your lives in the service of the only Master worth serving; labouring always for the souls of men, and not to tickle their ears, as I do. But this I can say —God knows how much rather I would be the obscure tenant of a lath-and-plaster cottage, with a lively sense of my interest in a Redeemer, than

* The Rev. Henry Venn, successively vicar of Huddersfield, Yorkshire, and rector of Yelling, Huntingdonshire, eminent for his piety and usefulness. He was the author of "The Complete Duty of Man," the design of which was to correct the deficiencies so justly imputable to "The Whole Duty of Man," by laying the foundation of moral duties in the principles inculcated by the Gospel. There is an interesting and valuable memoir of this excellent man, edited by the Rev. Henry Venn, B.D., his grandson, which we recommend to the notice of the reader.

† Mr. Berridge was Vicar of Everton, Beds; a most zealous and pious minister.

the most admired object of public notice without it. Alas! what is a whole poem, even one of Homer's, compared with a single aspiration that finds its way immediately to God, though clothed in ordinary language, or perhaps not articulated at all! These are my sentiments as much as ever they were, though my days are all running to waste among Greeks and Trojans. The night cometh when no man can work: and, if I am ordained to work to better purpose, that desirable period cannot be very distant. My day is beginning to shut in, as every man's must who is on the verge of sixty.

All the leisure that I have had of late for thinking has been given to the riots at Birmingham. What a horrid zeal for the church, and what a horrid loyalty to government, have manifested themselves there! How little do they dream that they could not have dishonoured their idol the Establishment more, and that the great Bishop of souls himself with abhorrence rejects their service! But I have not time to enlarge;—breakfast calls me; and all my post-breakfast time must be given to poetry. Adieu!

Most truly yours,

W. C.

TO THE REV. WALTER BAGOT.

Weston, August 2, 1791.

My dear Friend—I was much obliged, and still feel myself much obliged, to Lady Bagot for the visit with which she favoured me. Had it been

possible that I could have seen Lord Bagot too, I should have been completely happy. For, as it happened, I was that morning in better spirits than usual, and, though I arrived late, and after a long walk, and extremely hot, which is a circumstance very apt to disconcert me, yet I was not disconcerted half so much as I generally am at the sight of a stranger, especially of a stranger lady, and more especially at the sight of a stranger lady of quality. When the servant told me that Lady Bagot was in the parlour, I felt my spirits sink ten degrees, but, the moment I saw her, at least when I had been a minute in her company, I felt them rise again, and they soon rose even above their former pitch. I know two ladies of fashion now whose manners have this effect upon me, the lady in question and the Lady Spencer. I am a shy animal, and want much kindness to make me easy. Such I shall be to my dying day.

Here sit *I*, calling myself *shy*, yet have just published by the *bye*, two great volumes of po*etry*.

This reminds me of Ranger's observation in the "Suspicious Husband," who says to somebody, I forget whom, "*There is a degree of assurance in you modest men that we impudent fellows can never arrive at.*"—Assurance indeed! Have you seen 'em? What do you think they are? Nothing less, I can tell you, than a translation of Homer, of the sublimest poet in the world. That's all. Can I ever have the impudence to call myself shy again?

You live, I think, in the neighbourhood of Birmingham. What must you not have felt on the late

alarming occasion! You I suppose could see the fires from your windows. We, who only heard the news of them, have trembled. Never sure was religious zeal more terribly manifested or more to the prejudice of its own cause.†

Adieu, my dear friend, I am, with Mrs. Unwin's best compliments,

Ever yours,

W. C.

TO MRS. KING.*

Weston, Aug. 4, 1791.

My dear Madam—Your last letter, which gave us so unfavourable an account of your health, and which did not speak much more comfortably of Mr. King's, affected us with much concern. Of Dr. Raitt we may say in the words of Milton,

"His long experience did attain
To something like prophetic strain;"

for as he foretold to you, so he foretold to Mrs.

† The riots at Birmingham originated in the imprudent zeal of Dr. Priestley, and his adherents, the Unitarian dissenters, who assembled together at a public dinner, to commemorate the events of the French revolution. Toasts were given of an inflammatory tendency, and handbills were previously circulated of a similar character. The town of Birmingham, being distinguished for its loyalty, became deeply excited by these acts. The mob collected in great multitudes, and proceeded to the house of Dr. Priestley, which they destroyed with fire. All his valuable philosophical apparatus and manuscripts perished on this occasion. We concur with Cowper in lamenting such outrages.

* Private Correspondence.

Unwin, that, though her disorders might not much threaten life, they would yet cleave to her to the last; and she and perfect health must ever be strangers to each other. Such was his prediction, and it has been hitherto accomplished. Either head-ache or pain in the side has been her constant companion ever since we had the pleasure of seeing you. As for myself, I cannot properly say that I *enjoy* a good state of health, though in general I have it, because I have it accompanied with frequent fits of dejection, to which less health and better spirits would, perhaps, be infinitely preferable. But it pleased God that I should be born in a country where melancholy is the national characteristic. To say truth, I have often wished myself a Frenchman.

N. B. I write this in very good spirits.

You gave us so little hope in your last that we should have your company this summer at Weston, that to repeat our invitation seems almost like teasing you. I will only say, therefore, that, my Norfolk friends having left us, of whose expected arrival here I believe I told you in a former letter, we should be happy could you succeed them. We now, indeed, expect Lady Hesketh, but not immediately: she seldom sees Weston till all its summer beauties are fled, and red, brown, and yellow, have supplanted the universal verdure.

My Homer is gone forth, and I can devoutly say, "Joy go with it!" What place it holds in the estimation of the generality I cannot tell, having heard no more about it since its publication than if

no such work existed. I must except, however, an anonymous eulogium from some man of letters, which I received about a week ago. It was kind in a perfect stranger, as he avows himself to be, to relieve me, at so early a day, from much of the anxiety that I could not but feel on such an occasion. I should be glad to know who he is, only that I might thank him.

Mrs. Unwin, who is at this moment come down to breakfast, joins me in affectionate compliments to yourself and Mr. King; and I am, my dear madam,

Most sincerely yours,

W. C.

TO THE REV. MR. HURDIS.

Weston, August 9, 1791.

My dear Sir—I never make a correspondent wait for an answer through idleness, or want of proper respect for him; but if I am silent it is because I am busy, or not well, or because I stay till something occur that may make my letter at least a little better than mere blank paper. I therefore write speedily in reply to yours, being at present neither much occupied, nor at all indisposed, nor forbidden by a dearth of materials.

I wish always when I have a new piece in hand to be as secret as you, and there was a time when I could be so. Then I lived the life of a solitary, was not visited by a single neighbour, because I had none with whom I could associate; nor ever had an

inmate. This was when I dwelt at Olney; but since I have removed to Weston the case is different. Here I am visited by all around me, and study in a room exposed to all manner of inroads. It is on the ground floor, the room in which we dine, and in which I am sure to be found by all who seek me. They find me generally at my desk, and with my work, whatever it be, before me, unless perhaps I have conjured it into its hiding-place before they have had time to enter. This however is not always the case, and consequently, sooner or later, I cannot fail to be detected. Possibly you, who I suppose have a snug study, would find it impracticable to attend to any thing closely in an apartment exposed as mine, but use has made it familiar to me, and so familiar, that neither servants going and coming disconcert me; nor even if a lady, with an oblique glance of her eye, catches two or three lines of my MSS., do I feel myself inclined to blush, though naturally the shyest of mankind.

You did well, I believe, to cashier the subject of which you gave me a recital. It certainly wants those *agrémens* which are necessary to the success of any subject in verse. It is a curious story, and so far as the poor young lady was concerned a very affecting one; but there is a coarseness in the character of the hero that would have spoiled all. In fact, I find it myself a much easier matter to write, than to get a convenient theme to write on.

I am obliged to you for comparing me as you go both with Pope and with Homer. It is impossible in any other way of management to know whether

the translation be well executed or not, and if well, in what degree. It was in the course of such a process that I first became dissatisfied with Pope. More than thirty years since, and when I was a young Templar, I accompanied him with his original, line by line, through both poems. A fellow student of mine, a person of fine classical taste, joined himself with me in the labour. We were neither of us, as you may imagine, very diligent in our proper business.

I shall be glad if my reviewers, whosoever they may be, will be at the pains to read me as you do. I want no praise that I am not entitled to, but of that to which I am entitled I should be loth to lose a tittle, having worked hard to earn it.

I would heartily second the Bishop of Salisbury * in recommending to you a close pursuit of your Hebrew studies, were it not that I wish you to publish what I may understand. Do both, and I shall be satisfied.

Your remarks, if I may but receive them soon enough to serve me in case of a new edition, will be extremely welcome.

W. C.

TO JOHN JOHNSON, ESQ.

Weston, Aug. 9, 1791.

My dearest Johnny—The little that I have heard about Homer myself has been equally or more

* Dr. Douglas.

flattering than Dr ——'s intelligence, so that I have good reason to hope that I have not studied the old Grecian, and how to dress him, so long and so intensely, to no purpose. At present I am idle, both on account of my eyes and because I know not to what to attach myself in particular. Many different plans and projects are recommended to me. Some call aloud for original verse, others for more translation, and others for other things. Providence, I hope, will direct me in my choice, for other guide I have none, nor wish for another.

God bless you, my dearest Johnny,

W. C.

The active mind of Cowper, and the necessity of mental exertion, in order to arrest the terrible incursions of his depressing malady, soon led him to contract a new literary engagement. A splendid edition of Milton was at that time contemplated, intended to rival the celebrated Shakspeare of Boydell; and to combine all the adventitious aid that editorial lent, the professional skill of a most distinguished tist, and the utmost embellishment of type could mmand, to insure success. Johnson, the bookler, invited the co-operation of Cowper, in the onsible office of Editor. For such an undertakhe was unquestionably qualified, by his refined cal taste and discernment, and by his profound ration for this first of modern epic poets. Cowadily entered into this project, and by his admir-

able translations of the Latin and Italian poems of Milton, justly added to the fame which he had already acquired. But to those who know how to appreciate his poetic powers, and his noble ardour in proclaiming the most important truths, it must ever be a source of unfeigned regret that the hours given to translation, and especially to Homer, were not dedicated to the composition of some original work. Who would not have hailed with delight another poem, rivalling all the beauties and moral excellencies of "The Task," and endearing to the mind, with still higher claims, the sweet poet of nature, and the graceful yet sublime teacher of heavenly truth and wisdom!

> The grief is this—that, sunk in Homer's mine,
> I lose my precious years, now soon to fail,
> Handling his gold, which, howsoe'er it shine,
> Proves dross when balanc'd in the Christian scale.*

It was this literary engagement that first laid the foundation of that intercourse, which commenced at this time between Cowper and Hayley; an intercourse which seems to have ripened into subsequent habits of friendship. As their names have been so much associated together, and Hayley eventually became the poet's biographer, we shall record the circumstances of the origin of their intimacy in Hayley's own words.

"As it is to Milton that I am in a great measure indebted for what I must ever regard as a signal blessing, the friendship of Cowper, the reader

* See verses addressed to John Johnson, Esq.

will pardon me for dwelling a little on the circumstances that produced it: circumstances which often lead me to repeat those sweet verses of my friend, on the casual origin of our most valuable attachments:

> Mysterious are his ways, whose power
> Brings forth that unexpected hour,
> When minds that never met before,
> Shall meet, unite, and part no more:
> It is th' allotment of the skies,
> The hand of the Supremely Wise,
> That guides and governs our affections,
> And plans and orders our connexions.

These charming verses strike with peculiar force on my heart, when I recollect, that it was an idle endeavour to make us enemies which gave rise to our intimacy, and that I was providentially conducted to Weston at a season when my presence there afforded peculiar comfort to my affectionate friend under the pressure of a domestic affliction, which threatened to overwhelm his very tender spirits.*

"The entreaty of many persons, whom I wished to oblige, had engaged me to write a Life of Milton, before I had the slightest suspicion that my work could interfere with the projects of any man; but I was soon surprised and concerned in hearing that I was represented in a newspaper as an antagonist of Cowper.

"I immediately wrote to him on the subject, and our correspondence soon endeared us to each other in no common degree."

* An alarming attack with which Mrs. Unwin was visited.

We give credit to Hayley for the kind and amiable spirit which he manifested on this delicate occasion; and for the address with which he converted an apparent collision of interests into a magnanimous triumph of literary and courteous feeling.

The succeeding letters will be found to contain frequent allusions both to his past and newly contracted engagement.

TO SAMUEL ROSE, ESQ.

The Lodge, Sept. 14, 1791.

My dear Friend—Whoever reviews me will in fact have a laborious task of it, in the performance of which he ought to move leisurely, and to exercise much critical discernment. In the mean time, my courage is kept up by the arrival of such testimonies in my favour as give me the greatest pleasure; coming from quarters the most respectable. I have reason, therefore, to hope that our periodical judges will not be very averse to me, and that perhaps they may even favour me. If one man of taste and letters is pleased, another man so qualified can hardly be displeased; and if critics of a different description grumble, they will not however materially hurt me.

You, who know how necessary it is to me to be employed, will be glad to hear that I have been called to a new literary engagement, and that I have not refused it. A Milton, that is to rival, and, if possible, to exceed in splendour, Boydell's Shak-

re, is in contemplation, and I am in the editor's
. Fuseli is the painter. My business will be
lect notes from others, and to write original
; to translate the Latin and Italian poems,
to give a correct text. I shall have years al-
d me to do it in.

W. C.

TO THE REV. WALTER BAGOT.

Weston, Sept 21, 1791.

[y dear Friend—Of all the testimonies in favour
ıy Homer that I have received, none has given
so sincere a pleasure as that of Lord Bagot. It
n unmixed pleasure, and without a drawback;
ıuse I know him to be perfectly, and in all re-
:ts, whether erudition or a fine taste be in ques-
, so well qualified to judge me, that I can neither
ect nor wish a sentence more valuable than
—

..... ἐισόκ' ἀΰτμὴ
Ἐν στήθεσσι μένει, καὶ μοι φίλα γένατ' ὀρώρει.

hope by this time you have received your
mes, and are prepared to second the applauses
our brother—else, woe be to you! I wrote to
ıson immediately on the receipt of your last,
ng him a strict injunction to dispatch them to you
ıout delay. He had sold some time since a hun-
l of the unsubscribed-for copies.
have not a history in the world except Baker's

Chronicle, and that I borrowed three years ago from Mr. Throckmorton. Now the case is this: I am translating Milton's third Elegy—his Elegy on the death of the Bishop of Winchester.* He begins it with saying, that, while he was sitting alone, dejected, and musing on many melancholy themes, first, the idea of the Plague presented itself to his mind, and of the havoc made by it among the great. Then he proceeds thus:

> Tum memini clarique ducis, fratrisque verendi
> Intempestivis ossa cremata rogis:
> Et memini Heroum quos vidit ad æthera raptos
> Flevit et amissos Belgia tota duces.

I cannot learn from my only oracle, Baker, who this famous leader, and his reverend brother were. Neither does he at all ascertain for me the event alluded to in the second of these couplets. I am not yet possessed of Warton, who probably explains it, nor can be for a month to come. Consult him for me if you have him, or, if you have him not, consult some other. Or you may find the intelligence perhaps in your own budget; no matter how you come by it, only send it to me if you can, and as soon as you can, for I hate to leave unsolved difficulties behind me.† In the first year of Charles the First, Milton was seventeen years of

* Mœstus eram, et tacitus nullo comitante sedebam;
Hærebantque animo tristia plura meo: &c. &c.

† Warton informs us that the distinguished brothers alluded to in Milton's elegy are the Duke of Brunswick and Count Mansfelt, who fell in the war of the Palatinate, that fruitful

age, and then wrote this elegy. The period therefore to which I would refer you, is the two or three last years of James the First.

Ever yours,

W. C.

TO THE REV. MR. KING.*

Weston, Sept. 23, 1791.

Dear Sir—We are truly concerned at your account of Mrs. King's severe indisposition; and, though you had no better news to tell us, are much obliged to you for writing to inform us of it, and to Mrs. King for desiring you to do it. We take a lively interest in what concerns her. I should never have ascribed her silence to neglect, had she neither written to me herself nor commissioned you to write for her. I had, indeed, for some time expected a letter from her by every post, but accounted for my continual disappointment by supposing her at Edgeware, to which place she intended a visit, as she told me long since, and hoped that she would write immediately on her return.

Her sufferings will be felt here till we learn that they are removed; for which reason we shall be much obliged by the earliest notice of her recovery, which we most sincerely wish, if it please God, and

scene of warlike operations. The two latter are the Earls of Oxford and Southampton, who died at the siege of Breda, in the year 1625.

* Private Correspondence.

which will not fail to be a constant subject of prayer at Weston.

I beg you, sir, to present Mrs. Unwin's and my affectionate remembrances to Mrs. King, in which you are equally a partaker, and to believe me, with true esteem and much sincerity,

Yours,

W. C.

TO MRS. KING.*

Weston, Oct. 21, 1791.

My dear Friend—You could not have sent me more agreeable news than that of your better health, and I am greatly obliged to you for making me the first of your correspondents to whom you have given that welcome intelligence. This is a favour which I should have acknowledged much sooner, had not a disorder in my eyes, to which I have always been extremely subject, required that I should make as little use of my pen as possible. I felt much for you, when I read that part of your letter in which you mention your visitors, and the fatigue which, indisposed as you have been, they could not fail to occasion you. Agreeable as you would have found them at another time, and happy as you would have been in their company, you could not but feel the addition they necessarily made to your domestic attentions as a considerable inconvenience. But I

* Private Correspondence.

have always said, and shall never say otherwise, that if patience under adversity, and submission to the afflicting hand of God, be true fortitude—which no reasonable person can deny—then your sex have ten times more true fortitude to boast than ours; and I have not the least doubt that you carried yourself with infinitely more equanimity on that occasion than I should have done, or any he of my acquaintance. Why is it, since the first offender on earth was a woman, that the women are nevertheless, in all the most important points, superior to the men? That they are so I will not allow to be disputed, having observed it ever since I was capable of making the observation. I believe, on recollection, that, when I had the happiness to see you here, we agitated this question a little; but I do not remember that we arrived at any decision of it. The Scripture calls you the *weaker vessels;* and perhaps the best solution of the difficulty, therefore, may be found in those other words of Scripture—*My strength is perfected in weakness.* Unless you can furnish me with a better key than this, I shall be much inclined to believe that I have found the true one.

I am deep in a new literary engagement, being retained by my bookseller as editor of an intended most magnificent publication of Milton's Poetical Works. This will occupy me as much as Homer did for a year or two to come; and when I have finished it, I shall have run through all the degrees of my profession, as author, translator, and editor.

I know not that a fourth could be found; but if a fourth can be found, I dare say I shall find it.

I remain, my dear madam, your affectionate friend and humble servant,

W. C.

TO THE REV. WALTER BAGOT.

Weston, Oct. 25, 1791.

My dear Friend—Your unexpected and transient visit, like every thing else that is past, has now the appearance of a dream, but it was a pleasant one, and I heartily wish that such dreams could recur more frequently. Your brother Chester repeated his visit yesterday, and I never saw him in better spirits. At such times he has, now and then, the very look that he had when he was a boy, and when I see it I seem to be a boy myself, and entirely forget for a short moment the years that have intervened since I was one. The look that I mean is one that you, I dare say, have observed.—Then we are at Westminster again. He left with me that poem of your brother Lord Bagot's which was mentioned when you were here. It was a treat to me, and I read it to my cousin Lady Hesketh and to Mrs. Unwin, to whom it was a treat also. It has great sweetness of numbers and much elegance of expression, and is just such a poem as I should be happy to have composed myself about a year ago, when I was loudly called upon by a certain noble-

man * to celebrate the beauties of his villa. But I had two insurmountable difficulties to contend with. One was that I had never seen his villa, and the other, that I had no eyes at that time for any thing but Homer. Should I at any time hereafter undertake the task, I shall now at least know how to go about it, which, till I had seen Lord Bagot's poem, I verily did not. I was particularly charmed with the parody of those beautiful lines of Milton:

> "The song was partial, but the harmony——
> (What could it less, when spirits immortal sing?)
> Suspended hell, and took with ravishment
> The thronging audience."

There's a parenthesis for you! The parenthesis it seems is out of fashion, and perhaps the moderns are in the right to proscribe what they cannot attain to. I will answer for it that had we the art at this day of insinuating a sentiment in this graceful manner, no reader of taste would quarrel with the practice. Lord Bagot showed his by selecting the passage for his imitation.

I would beat Warton, if he were living, for supposing that Milton ever repented of his compliment to the memory of Bishop Andrews. I neither do, nor can, nor will believe it. Milton's mind could not be narrowed by any thing, and, though he quarrelled with episcopacy in the church of England idea of it, I am persuaded that a good bishop, as

* Lord Bagot.

well as any other good man, of whatsoever rank or order, had always a share of his veneration.*

Yours, my dear friend,
Very affectionately,
W. C.

TO JOHN JOHNSON, ESQ.

Weston, Oct. 31, 1791.

My dear Johnny—Your kind and affectionate letter well deserves my thanks, and should have had them long ago, had I not been obliged lately to give my attention to a mountain of unanswered letters, which I have just now reduced to a mole-hill; yours lay at the bottom, and I have at last worked my way down to it.

It gives me great pleasure that you have found a house to your minds. May you all three be happier in it than the happiest that ever occupied it before you! But my chief delight of all is to learn that you and Kitty are so completely cured of your long and threatening maladies. I always thought highly of Dr. Kerr, but his extraordinary success in your two instances has even inspired me with an affection for him.

My eyes are much better than when I wrote last, though seldom perfectly well many days together. At this season of the year I catch perpetual colds, and shall continue to do so till I have got the

* How much more charitable is Cowper's comment, than the injurious surmise of Warton!

better of that tenderness of habit with which the summer never fails to affect me.

I am glad that you have heard well of my work in your country. Sufficient proofs have reached me from various quarters that I have not ploughed the field of Troy in vain.

Were you here, I would gratify you with an enumeration of particulars, but since you are not it must content you to be told that I have every reason to be satisfied.

Mrs. Unwin, I think, in her letter to Cousin Balls, made mention of my new engagement. I have just entered on it, and therefore can at present say little about it.

It is a very creditable one in itself, and may I but acquit myself of it with sufficiency it will do me honour. The commentator's part however is a new one to me, and one that I little thought to appear in.

Remember your promise that I shall see you in the spring.

The Hall has been full of company ever since you went, and at present my Catharina * is there, singing and playing like an angel.

W. C.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

Weston, Nov. 14, 1791.

My dear Friend—I have waited and wished for

* The present Dowager Lady Throckmorton.

your opinion with the feelings that belong to the value that I have for it, and am very happy to find it so favourable. In my table-drawer I treasure up a bundle of suffrages sent me by those of whose approbation I was most ambitious, and shall presently insert yours among them.

I know not why we should quarrel with compound epithets; it is certain, at least, they are as agreeable to the genius of our language as to that of the Greek, which is sufficiently proved by their being admitted into our common and colloquial dialect. Black-eyed, nut-brown, crook-shanked, hump-backed, are all compound epithets, and, together with a thousand other such, are used continually, even by those who profess a dislike to such combinations in poetry. Why then do they treat with so much familiarity a thing that they say disgusts them? I doubt if they could give this question a reasonable answer, unless they should answer it by confessing themselves unreasonable.

I have made a considerable progress in the translation of Milton's Latin poems. I give them, as opportunity offers, all the variety of measure that I can. Some I render in heroic rhyme, some in stanzas, some in seven and some in eight syllable measure, and some in blank verse. They will altogether, I hope, make an agreeable miscellany for the English reader. They are certainly good in themselves, and cannot fail to please but by the fault of their translator.

W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.*

Weston, Nov. 16, 1791.

My dear Friend—I am weary of making you wait for an answer, and therefore resolve to send you one, though without the lines you ask for. Such as they are, they have been long ready; and could I have found a conveyance for them, should have been with you weeks ago. Mr. Bean's last journey to town might have afforded me an opportunity to send them, but he gave me not sufficient notice. They must, therefore, be still delayed till either he shall go to London again or somebody else shall offer. I thank you for yours, which are as much better than mine as gold is better than feathers.

It seemed necessary that I should account for my apparent tardiness to comply with the obliging request of a lady, and of a lady who employed you as her intermedium. None was wanted, as you well assured her. But had there been occasion for one, she could not possibly have found a better.

I was much pleased with your account of your visit to Cowslip Green,† both for the sake of what you saw there, and because I am sure you must have been as happy in such company as any situation in this world can make you. Miss More has been always employed, since I first heard of her doings, as becomes a Christian. So she was while endea-

* Private Correspondence.

† The residence of the late Mrs. Hannah More, near Bristol.

vouring to reform the unreformable great; and so she is, while framing means and opportunities to instruct the more tractable little. Horace's *Virginibus, puerisque*, may be her motto, but in a sense much nobler than he has annexed to it. I cannot, however, be entirely reconciled to the thought of her being henceforth silent, though even for the sake of her present labours.* A pen useful as hers ought not, perhaps, to be laid aside; neither, perhaps, will she altogether renounce it, but, when she has established her schools, and habituated them to the discipline she intends, will find it desirable to resume it. I rejoice that she has a sister like herself, capable of bidding defiance to fatigue and hardship, to dirty roads and wet raiment, in so excellent a cause.†

I beg that when you write next to either of those ladies, you will present my best compliments to Miss Martha, and tell her that I can never feel myself flattered more than I was by her application. God knows how unworthy I judge myself, at the same time, to be admitted into a collection‡ of which you are a member. Were there not a crowned head or two to keep me in countenance, I should even blush to think of it.

I would that I could see some of the mountains

* The establishment of her schools, comprising the children of several parishes, then in a most neglected and uncivilized state. See the interesting account of the origin and progress of these schools in the Memoir of Mrs. More.

† Mrs. Martha More.

‡ Of autographs.

which you have seen; especially, because Dr. Johnson has pronounced that no man is qualified to be a poet who has never seen a mountain. But mountains I shall never see, unless perhaps in a dream, or unless there are such in heaven. Nor those, unless I receive twice as much mercy as ever yet was shown to any man.

I am now deep in Milton, translating his Latin poems for a pompous edition, of which you have undoubtedly heard. This amuses me for the present, and will for a year or two. So long, I presume, I shall be occupied in the several functions that belong to my present engagement.

Mrs. Unwin and I are about as well as usual; always mindful of you, and always affectionately so. Our united love attends yourself and Miss Catlett.

Believe me, most truly yours,

W. C.

TO THE REV. WALTER BAGOT.

Weston Underwood, Dec. 5, 1791.

My dear Friend—Your last brought me two cordials; for what can better deserve that name than the cordial approbation of two such readers as your brother, the bishop, and your good friend and neighbour, the clergyman? The former I have ever esteemed and honoured with the justest cause, and am as ready to honour and esteem the latter as you can wish me to be, and as his wishes and talents deserve. Do I hate a parson? Heaven forbid! I

love you all when you are good for any thing, and, as to the rest, I would mend them if I could, and that is the worst of my intentions towards them.

I heard above a month since that this first edition of my work was at that time nearly sold. It will not therefore, I presume, be long before I must go to press again. This I mention merely from an earnest desire to avail myself of all other strictures that either your good neighbour, Lord Bagot, the bishop, or yourself,

πάντων ἐκπαγλόταθ' ἁνδρῶν,

may happen to have made, and will be so good as to favour me with. Those of the good Evander contained in your last have served me well, and I have already, in the three different places referred to, accommodated the text to them. And this I have done in one instance even a little against the bias of my own opinion.

.....ἐγὼ δέ κεν ἀυτὸς ἕλωμαι
Ἑλθὼν σὺν πλεόνεσσι.

The sense I had given of these words is the sense in which an old scholiast has understood them, as appears in Clarke's note *in loco*. Clarke indeed prefers the other, but it does not appear plain to me that he does it with good reason against the judgment of a very ancient commentator and a Grecian. And I am the rather inclined to this persuasion, because Achilles himself seems to have apprehended that Agamemnon would not content himself with Briseis only, when he says,

But I have OTHER precious things on board,
Of THESE take NONE away without my leave, &c.

It is certain that the words are ambiguous, and that the sense of them depends altogether on the punctuation. But I am always under the correction of so able a critic as your neighbour, and have altered, as I say, my version accordingly.

As to Milton, the die is cast. I am engaged, have bargained with Johnson, and cannot recede. I should otherwise have been glad to do as you advise, to make the translation of his Latin and Italian part of another volume; for, with such an addition, I have nearly as much verse in my budget as would be required for the purpose. This squabble, in the mean time, between Fuseli and Boydell * does not interest me at all; let it terminate as it may, I have only to perform my job, and leave the event to be decided by the combatants.

Suave mari magno turbantibus æquora ventis
E terrâ ingentem alterius spectare laborem.

Adieu, my dear friend, I am most sincerely yours,

W. C.

Why should you suppose that I did not admire the poem you showed me? I did admire it, and told you so, but you carried it off in your pocket, and so doing left me to forget it, and without the means of inquiry.

* This quarrel was connected with the paintings in the Shakspeare Gallery, in Pall Mall, formerly much visited.

I am thus nimble in answering, merely with a view to insure myself the receipt of other remarks in time for a new impression.

TO THE REV. MR. HURDIS.

Weston, Dec. 10, 1791.

Dear Sir—I am much obliged to you for wishing that I were employed in some original work rather than in translation. To tell the truth, I am of your mind; and, unless I could find another Homer, I shall promise (I believe) and vow, when I have done with Milton, never to translate again. But my veneration for our great countryman is equal to what I feel for the Grecian; and consequently I am happy, and feel myself honourably employed whatever I do for Milton. I am now translating his *Epitaphium Damonis*, a pastoral in my judgment equal to any of Virgil's Bucolics, but of which Dr. Johnson (so it pleased him) speaks, as I remember, contemptuously. But he who never saw any beauty in a rural scene was not likely to have much taste for a pastoral. *In pace quiescat!*

I was charmed with your friendly offer to be my advocate with the public; should I want one, I know not where I could find a better. The reviewer in the Gentleman's Magazine grows more and more civil. Should he continue to sweeten at this rate, as he proceeds, I know not what will become of all the little modesty I have left. I have availed myself of some of his strictures, for I wish to learn from every body.

W. C.

TO SAMUEL ROSE, ESQ.

The Lodge, Dec. 21, 1791.

My dear Friend—It grieves me, after having indulged a little hope that I might see you in the holidays, to be obliged to disappoint myself. The occasion too is such as will insure me your sympathy.

On Saturday last, while I was at my desk near the window, and Mrs. Unwin at the fireside opposite to it, I heard her suddenly exclaim, "Oh! Mr. Cowper, don't let me fall!" I turned and saw her actually falling, together with her chair, and started to her side just in time to prevent her. She was seized with a violent giddiness, which lasted, though with some abatement, the whole day, and was attended too with some other very, very alarming symptoms. At present, however, she is relieved from the vertigo, and seems in all respects better.

She has been my faithful and affectionate nurse for many years, and consequently has a claim on all my attentions. She has them, and will have them as long as she wants them; which will probably be, at the best, a considerable time to come. I feel the shock, as you may suppose, in every nerve. God grant that there may be no repetition of it. Another such a stroke upon her would, I think, overset me completely; but at present I hold up bravely.

W. C.

Few events could have afflicted the tender and affectionate mind of Cowper more acutely than the

distressing incident recorded in the preceding letter. Mrs. Unwin had for some time past experienced frequent returns of head-ache, sensations of bodily pain, and an increasing incapacity even for the common routine of daily duties. By an intelligent observer these symptoms might have been interpreted as the precursors of some impending dispensation, in the same manner as the gathering clouds and the solemn stillness of nature announce the approaching storm and tempest. But the stroke is not the less felt because it is anticipated. Among the sorrows which inflict a wound on the feeling heart, to see a beloved object, identified in character, in sentiment, and pursuit, endeared to us by the memory of the past, and by the fears and anxieties of the present, sinking under the slow yet consuming incursions of disease; and to be assured, as we contemplate the fading form, that the moment of separation is drawing nigh; this is indeed a trial, where the mind feels its own bitterness, and is awakened to the strongest emotions of tenderness and love.

The cheering prospect of a happy change, founded on an interest in the promises of the Gospel, can alone mitigate the mournful anticipation. It is a subject for deep thankfulness when we can cherish the persuasion for ourselves, or, like Cowper, feel its consoling support for others; and when we are enabled to exclaim with the poet,

> The soul's dark cottage, batter'd and decay'd,
> Lets in new light thro' chinks that time has made;
> Stronger by weakness, wiser men become,
> As they draw near to their eternal home.

Leaving the old, both worlds at once they view,
That stand upon the threshold of the new.
Waller's Divine Poesie.

The following letter communicates some further ills of Mrs. Unwin's severe attack, and of Cowper's ings on this distressing occasion.

TO MRS. KING.

Weston, Jan. 26, 1792.

My dear Madam—Silent as I have long been, I e had but too good a reason for being so. About weeks since, Mrs. Unwin was seized with a sud- and most alarming disorder, a vertigo, which uld have thrown her out of her chair to the und, had I not been quick enough to catch her le she was falling. For some moments her knees ancles were so entirely disabled that she had use of them: and it was with the exertion of all strength that I replaced her in her seat. Many s she kept her bed, and for some weeks her mber; but, at length, has joined me again in study. Her recovery has been extremely slow, she is still feeble; but, I thank God, not so ble but that I hope for her perfect restoration as spring advances. I am persuaded that, with r feelings for your friends, you will know how to gine what I must have suffered on an occasion istressing, and to pardon a silence owing to such use.

The account you give me of the patience with ich a lady of your acquaintance has lately en-

dured a terrible operation, is a strong proof that your sex surpasses ours in heroic fortitude. I call it by that name, because I verily believe that, in God's account, there is more true heroism in suffering his will with meek submission than in doing our own, or that of our fellow mortals who may have a right to command us, with the utmost valour that was ever exhibited in a field of battle. Renown and glory are, in general, the incitements to such exertions; but no laurels are to be won by sitting patiently under the knife of a surgeon. The virtue is, therefore, of a less suspicious character; the principle of it more simple, and the practice more difficult:—considerations that seem sufficiently to warrant my opinion, that the infallible Judge of human conduct may possibly behold with more complacency a suffering than an active courage.

I forget if I told you that I am engaged for a new edition of Milton's Poems. In fact, I have still other engagements, and so various, that I hardly know to which of them all to give my first attentions. I have only time, therefore, to condole with you on the double loss you have lately sustained, and to congratulate you on being female; because, as such, you will, I trust, acquit yourself well under so severe a trial.

I remain, my dear Madam,

Most sincerely yours,

W. C.

TO THE REV. WALTER BAGOT.

Weston Underwood, Feb. 14, 1792.

My dear Friend—It is the only advantage I believe, that they who love each other derive from living at a distance, that the news of such ills as may happen to either seldom reaches the other till the cause of complaint is over. Had I been your next neighbour, I should have suffered with you during the whole indisposition of your two children and your own. As it is, I have nothing to do but to rejoice in your own recovery and theirs, which I do sincerely, and wish only to learn from yourself that it is complete.

I thank you for suggesting the omission of the line due to the helmet of Achilles. How the omission happened I know not, whether by my fault or the printer's; it is certain, however, that I had translated it, and I have now given it its proper place.

I purpose to keep back a second edition till I have had opportunity to avail myself of the remarks both of friends and strangers. The ordeal of criticism still awaits me in the reviews, and probably they will all in their turn mark many things that may be mended. By the Gentleman's Magazine I have already profited in several instances. My reviewer there, though favourable in the main, is a pretty close observer, and, though not always right, is often so.

In the affair of Milton I will have no *horrida*

bella if I can help it.* It is at least my present purpose to avoid them if possible. For which reason, unless I should soon see occasion to alter my plan, I shall confine myself merely to the business of an annotator, which is my proper province, and shall sift out of Warton's notes every tittle that relates to the private character, political or religious principles, of my author. These are properly subjects for a biographer's handling, but by no means, as it seems to me, for a commentator's.

In answer to your question, if I have had a correspondence with the Chancellor, I reply—yes. We exchanged three or four letters on the subject of Homer, or rather on the subject of my Preface. He was doubtful whether or not my preference of blank verse, as affording opportunity for a closer version, was well founded. On this subject he wished to be convinced; defended rhyme with much learning, and much shrewd reasoning; but at last allowed me the honour of the victory, expressing himself in these words:—"*I am clearly convinced that Homer may be best rendered in blank verse, and you have succeeded in the passages that I have looked into.*"

Thus it is when a wise man differs in opinion. Such a man will be candid; and conviction, not triumph, will be his object.

Adieu!——The hard name I gave you I take to myself, and am your

εκπαγλότατος,

W. C.

* He alludes to the dispute between Boydell and Fuseli the painter.

We are indebted to a friend for the opportunity of inserting nine additional letters, addressed by Cowper to Thomas Park, Esq., known as the author of "Sonnets and Miscellaneous Poems," and subsequently as the editor of that splendid work, "Walpole's Royal and Noble Authors."

TO THOMAS PARK, ESQ.

Weston Underwood, Feb. 19, 1792.

Dear Sir—Yesterday evening your parcel came safe to hand, containing the "Cursory Remarks," "Fletcher's Faithful Shepperdesse," and your kind letter, for all which I am much obliged to you.

Every thing that relates to Milton must be welcome to an editor of him; and I am so unconnected with the learned world that, unless assistance seeks *me*, I am not very likely to find it. Fletcher's work was not in my possession; nor, indeed, was I possessed of any other, when I engaged in this undertaking, that could serve me much in the performance of it. The various untoward incidents of a very singular life have deprived me of a valuable collection, partly inherited from my father, partly from my brother,* and partly made by myself; so that I have at present fewer books than any man ought to have who writes for the public, especially who assumes the character of an editor. At the

* The Rev. John Cowper, Fellow of Bennet College, Cambridge.

——————"I had a brother once;
Peace to the memory of the man of worth," &c. &c.

present moment, however, I find myself tolerably well provided for this occasion by the kindness of a few friends, who have not been backward to pick from their shelves every thing that they thought might be useful to me. I am happy to be able to number you among these friendly contributors.

You will add a considerable obligation to those you have already conferred, if you will be so good as to furnish me with such notices of your own as you offer. Parallel passages, or, at least, a striking similarity of expression, is always worthy of remark; and I shall reprint, I believe, all Mr. Warton's notes of that kind, except such as are rather trivial, and some, perhaps, that are a little whimsical, and except that I shall diminish the number of his references, which are not seldom redundant. Where a word only is in question, and that, perhaps, not an uncommon one in the days of Milton, his use of it proves little or nothing; for it is possible that authors writing on similar subjects may use the same words by mere accident. Borrowing seems to imply poverty, and of poverty I can rather suspect any man than Milton. But I have as yet determined nothing absolutely concerning the mode of my commentary, having hitherto been altogether busied in the translation of his Latin poems. These I have finished, and shall immediately proceed to a version of the Italian. They, being few, will not detain me long; and, when they are done, will leave me at full liberty to deliberate on the main business, and to plan and methodize my operations.

I shall be always happy in, and account myself

honoured by, your communications, and hope that our correspondence thus begun will not terminate *in limine primo.*

I am, dear Sir, with much respect,
Your most obliged humble servant,
W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.*

Weston, Feb. 20, 1792.

My dear Friend—When I wrote the lines in question, I was, as I almost always am, so pressed for time, that I was obliged to put them down in a great hurry.† Perhaps I printed them wrong. If a full stop be made at the end of the second line, the appearance of inconsistency, perhaps, will vanish: but should you still think them liable to that objection, they may be altered thus:

In vain to live from age to age
We modern bards endeavour;
But write in Patty's book one page,‡
You gain your point for ever.

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* Private Correspondence.

† Mrs. Martha More had requested Cowper to furnish a contribution to her collection of autographs. The result appears in the sequel of this letter.

‡ In the third volume of the Poems, the lines stand thus, on a farther suggestion of Lady Hesketh's:—

In vain to live from age to age,
While modern bards endeavour,
I write my name in Patty's page,
And gain my point for ever.

W. Cowper.

March 6, 1792.

Trifling enough I readily confess they are; but I have always allowed myself to trifle occasionally; and on this occasion had not, nor have at present, time to do more. By the way, should you think this amended copy worthy to displace the former, I must wait for some future opportunity to send you them properly transcribed for the purpose.

Your demand of more original composition from me will, if I live, and it please God to afford me health, in all probability be sooner or later gratified. In the mean time, you need not, and if you turn the matter in your thoughts a little, you will perceive that you need not, think me unworthily employed in preparing a new edition of Milton. His two principal poems are of a kind that call for an editor who believes the gospel and is well grounded in all evangelical doctrine. Such an editor they have never had yet, though only such a one can be qualified for the office.

We mourn for the mismanagement at Botany Bay, and foresee the issue. The Romans were, in their origin, banditti; and if they became in time masters of the world, it was not by drinking grog, and allowing themselves in all sorts of licentiousness. The African colonization, and the manner of conducting it, has long been matter to us of pleasing speculation. God has highly honoured Mr. Thornton; and I doubt not that the subsequent history of the two settlements will strikingly evince the superior wisdom of his proceedings.*—Yours,

W. C.

* This alludes to the new colony for liberated Africans, at

P. S. Lady Hesketh made the same objection to my verses as you; but, she being a lady-critic, I did not heed her. As they stand at present, however, they are hers; and I believe you will think them much improved.

My heart bears me witness how glad I shall be to see you at the time you mention; and Mrs. Unwin says the same.

TO THE REV. MR. HURDIS.

Weston, Feb. 21, 1792.

My dear Sir—My obligations to you on the score of your kind and friendly remarks demanded from me a much more expeditious acknowledgment of the numerous packets that contained them; but I have been hindered by many causes, each of which you would admit as a sufficient apology, but none of which I will mention, lest I should give too much of my paper to the subject. My acknowledgments are likewise due to your fair sister, who has transcribed so many sheets in a neat hand, and with so much accuracy.

At present I have no leisure for Homer, but shall certainly find leisure to examine him with reference to your strictures, before I send him a second time to the printer. This I am at present unwilling to do, choosing rather to wait, if that may

Sierra Leone; in the origin of which Mr. Henry Thornton and Mr. Zachary Macauley were mainly instrumental. For interesting accounts of this colony, see the "Missionary Register of the Church Missionary Society," *passim*.

be, till I shall have undergone the discipline of all the reviewers; none of which have yet taken me in hand, the Gentleman's Magazine excepted. By several of his remarks I have benefited, and shall no doubt be benefited by the remarks of all.

Milton at present engrosses me altogether. His Latin pieces I have translated, and have begun with the Italian. These are few, and will not detain me long. I shall then proceed immediately to deliberate upon and to settle the plan of my commentary, which I have hitherto had but little time to consider. I look forward to it, for this reason, with some anxiety. I trust at least that this anxiety will cease when I have once satisfied myself about the best manner of conducting it. But, after all, I seem to fear more about the labour to which it calls me than any great difficulty with which it is likely to be attended. To the labours of versifying, I have no objection, but to the labours of criticism I am new, and apprehend that I shall find them wearisome. Should that be the case, I shall be dull, and must be contented to share the censure of being so with almost all the commentators that have ever existed.

I have expected, but not wondered that I have not received, Sir Thomas More and the other MSS. you promised me; because my silence has been such, considering how loudly I was called upon to write, that you must have concluded me either dead or dying, and did not choose perhaps to trust them to executors.

W. C.

TO THE REV. MR. HURDIS.

Weston, March 2, 1792.

My dear Sir—I have this moment finished a comparison of your remarks with my text, and feel so sensibly my obligations to your great accuracy and kindness, that I cannot deny myself the pleasure of expressing them immediately. I only wish that instead of revising the two first books of the Iliad, you could have found leisure to revise the whole two poems, sensible how much my work would have benefited.

I have not always adopted your lines, though often, perhaps, at least as good as my own; because there will and must be dissimilarity of manner between two so accustomed to the pen as we are. But I have let few passages go unamended which you seemed to think exceptionable; and this not at all from complaisance: for in such a cause I would not sacrifice an iota on that principle, but on clear conviction.

I have as yet heard nothing from Johnson about the two MSS. you announce, but feel ashamed that I should want your letter to remind me of your obliging offer to inscribe Sir Thomas More to me, should you resolve to publish him. Of my consent to such a measure you need not doubt. I am covetous of respect and honour from all such as you.

Tame hare, at present, I have none. But, to make amends, I have a beautiful little spaniel, called Beau, to whom I will give the kiss your sister Sally

intended for the former, unless she should command me to bestow it elsewhere; it shall attend on her directions.

I am going to take a last dinner with a most agreeable family, who have been my only neighbours ever since I have lived at Weston. On Monday they go to London, and in the summer to an estate in Oxfordshire, which is to be their home in future. The occasion is not at all a pleasant one to me, nor does it leave me spirits to add more, than that I am, dear Sir,

Most truly yours,

W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.*

Weston, March, 4, 1792.

My dear Friend—All our little world is going to London, the gulph that swallows most of our good things, and, like a bad stomach, too often assimilates them to itself. Our neighbours at the Hall go thither to-morrow. Mr. and Mrs. Throckmorton, as we lately called them, but now Sir John and my Lady, are no longer inhabitants here, but henceforth of Bucklands, in Berkshire. I feel the loss of them, and shall feel it, since kinder or more friendly treatment I never can receive at any hands than I have always found at theirs. But it has long been a foreseen change, and was, indeed, almost daily expected

* Private Correspondence.

long before it happened. The desertion of the Hall, however, will not be total. The second brother, George, now Mr. Courtenay,† intends to reside there; and, with him, as with his elder brother, I have always been on terms the most agreeable.

Such is this variable scene: so variable that, had the reflections I sometimes make upon it a permanent influence, I should tremble at the thought of a new connexion, and, to be out of the reach of its mutability, lead almost the life of a hermit. It is well with those who, like you, have God for their companion. Death cannot deprive them of Him, and he changes not the place of his abode. Other changes, therefore, to them are all supportable; and what you say of your own experience is the strongest possible proof of it. Had you lived without God, you could not have endured the loss you mention. May He preserve me from a similar one; at least, till he shall be pleased to draw me to himself again! Then, if ever that day come, it will make me equal to any burthen; but at present I can bear nothing well.

I am sincerely yours,

W. C.

TO MRS. KING.*

Weston, March 8, 1792.

My dear Madam—Having just finished all my

† Afterwards Sir George Throckmorton.

* Private Correspondence.

Miltonic translations, and not yet begun my comments, I find an interval that cannot be better employed than in discharging arrears due to my correspondents, of whom I begin first a letter to you, though your claim be of less ancient standing than those of all the rest.

I am extremely sorry that you have been so much indisposed, and especially that your indisposition has been attended with such excessive pain. But may I be permitted to observe, that your going to church on Christmas-day, immediately after such a sharp fit of rheumatism, was not according to the wisdom with which I believe you to be endued, nor was it acting so charitably toward yourself as I am persuaded you would have acted toward another. To another you would, I doubt not, have suggested that text—"I will have mercy and not sacrifice," as implying a gracious dispensation, in circumstances like yours, from the practice of so severe and dangerous a service.

Mrs. Unwin, I thank God, is better, but still wants much of complete restoration. We have reached a time of life when heavy blows, if not fatal, are at least long felt.

I have received many testimonies concerning my Homer, which do me much honour, and afford me great satisfaction; but none from which I derive, or have reason to derive, more than that of Mr. Martyn. It is of great use to me, when I write, to suppose some such person at my elbow, witnessing what I do; and I ask myself frequently—Would this please him? If I think it would, it stands: if

otherwise, I alter it. My work is thus finished, as it were, under the eye of some of the best judges, and has the better chance to win their approbation when they actually see it.

I am, my dear Madam,
Affectionately yours,
W. C.

TO THOMAS PARK, ESQ.

Weston Underwood, March 10, 1792.

Dear Sir—You will have more candour, as I hope and believe, than to impute my delay to answer your kind and friendly letter to inattention or want of a cordial respect for the writer of it. To suppose any such cause of my silence were injustice both to yourself and me. The truth is, I am a very busy man, and cannot gratify myself with writing to my friends so punctually as I wish.

You have not in the least fallen in my esteem on account of your employment,* as you seemed to ap-

* Mezzotinto engraving. Mr. Park, in early youth, fluctuated in the choice between the sister arts of poetry, music, and painting, and composed the following lines to record the result.

By fancy warm'd, I seiz'd the quill,
And poetry the strain inspir'd;
Music improv'd it by her skill,
Till I with both their charms was fir'd.

Won by the graces each display'd,
Their younger sister I forgot;
Though first to her my vows were paid,—
By fate or choice it matters not.

prehend that you might. It is an elegant one, and, when you speak modestly, as you do, of your proficiency in it, I am far from giving you entire credit for the whole assertion. I had indeed supposed you a person of independent fortune, who had nothing to do but to gratify himself; and whose mind, being happily addicted to literature, was at full leisure to enjoy its innocent amusement. But it seems I was mistaken, and your time is principally due to an art which has a right pretty much to engross your attention, and which gives rather the air of an intrigue to your intercourse and familiarity with the muses than a lawful connexion. No matter: I am not prudish in this respect, but honour you the more for a passion, virtuous and laudable in itself; and which you indulge not, I dare say, without benefit both to yourself and your acquaintance. I, for one, am likely to reap the fruit of your amours, and ought, therefore, to be one of the last to quarrel with them.

You are in danger, I perceive, of thinking of me more highly than you ought to think. I am not one of the *literati*, among whom you seem disposed to place me. Far from it. I told you in my last how heinously I am unprovided with the means of being so, having long since sent all my books to market. My learning accordingly lies in a very narrow com-

> She, jealous of their rival powers,
> And to repay the injury done,
> Condemn'd me through life's future hours,
> *All* to admire, but wed with none.
>
> T. P.

pass. It is school-boy learning somewhat improved, and very little more. From the age of twenty to twenty-three, I was occupied, or ought to have been, in the study of the law. From thirty-three to sixty I have spent my time in the country, where my reading has been only an apology for idleness, and where, when I had not either a magazine or a review in my hand, I was sometimes a carpenter, at others a bird-cage maker, or a gardener, or a drawer of landscapes. At fifty years of age I commenced an author. It is a whim that has served me longest and best, and which will probably be my last.

Thus you see I have had very little opportunity to become what is properly called—*learned*. In truth, having given myself so entirely of late to poetry, I am not sorry for this deficiency, since great learning, I have been sometimes inclined to suspect, is rather a hindrance to the fancy than a furtherance.

You will do me a favour by sending me a copy of Thomson's monumental inscription. He was a poet, for whose memory, as you justly suppose, I have great respect; in common, indeed, with all who have ever read him with taste and attention.

Wishing you heartily success in your present literary undertaking and in all professional ones, I remain,

Dear Sir, with great esteem,

Sincerely yours.

W. C.

P.S. After what I have said, I will not blush to confess, that I am at present perfectly unacquainted with the merits of Drummond, but shall be happy to see him in due time, as I should be to see any author edited by *you*.

TO JOHN JOHNSON, ESQ.

Weston, March 11, 1792.

My dear Johnny—You talk of primroses that you pulled on Candlemas-day; but what think you of me that heard a nightingale on new-year's day? Perhaps I am the only man in England who can boast of such good fortune; good indeed, for if it was at all an omen it could not be an unfavourable one. The winter, however, is now making himself amends, and seems the more peevish for having been encroached on at so undue a season. Nothing less than a large slice out of the spring will satisfy him.

Lady Hesketh left us yesterday. She intended to have left us four days sooner; but in the evening before the day fixed for her departure, snow enough fell to occasion just so much delay of

We have faint hopes that in the month of M we shall see her again. I know that you have a letter from her, and you will no doubt have grace not to make her wait long for an answer

We expect Mr. Rose on Tuesday; but he with us only till the Saturday following. Wit I shall have some conferences on the subj

Homer, respecting a new edition I mean, and some perhaps on the subject of Milton; on him I have not yet begun to comment, or even fix the time when I shall.

Forget not your promised visit!

W. C.

We add the verses composed by Cowper on the extraordinary incident mentioned at the beginning of the preceding letter.

TO THE NIGHTINGALE, WHICH THE AUTHOR HEARD ON NEW-YEAR'S DAY, 1792.*

Whence is it, that amaz'd I hear,
From yonder wither'd spray,
This foremost morn of all the year,
The melody of May?

And why, since thousands would be proud
Of such a favour shown,
Am I selected from the crowd,
To witness it alone?

Sing'st thou, sweet Philomel, to me,
For that I also long
Have practis'd in the groves like thee,
Though not, like thee, in song?

Or sing'st thou rather under force
Of some divine command,
Commission'd to presage a course
Of happier days at hand?

Thrice welcome then! for many along
And joyless year have I,
As thou to-day, put forth my song
Beneath a wintry sky.

But thee no wintry skies can harm,
Who only need'st to sing,
To make e'en January charm,
And ev'ry season spring.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.*

Weston, March 18, 1792.

My dear Friend—We are now once more reduced to our dual state, having lost our neighbours at the Hall and our inmate Lady Hesketh. Mr. Rose, indeed, has spent two or three days here, and is still with us, but he leaves us in the afternoon. There are those in the world whom we love, and whom we are happy to see; but we are happy likewise in each other, and so far independent of our fellow-mortals as to be able to pass our time comfortably without them:—as comfortably, at least, as Mrs. Unwin's frequent indispositions, and my no less frequent troubles of mind, will permit. When I am much distressed, any company but hers distresses me more, and makes me doubly sensible of my sufferings, though sometimes, I confess, it falls out otherwise; and, by the help of more general conversation, I recover that elasticity of mind which

* Private Correspondence.

is able to resist the pressure. On the whole, I believe I am situated exactly as I should wish to be, were my situation to be determined by my own election; and am denied no comfort that is compatible with the total absence of the chief of all.

Adieu, my dear friend,

I remain, affectionately yours,

W. C.

TO THE REV. MR. HURDIS.

Weston, March 23, 1792.

My dear Sir—I have read your play carefully, and with great pleasure; it seems now to be a performance that cannot fail to do you much credit. Yet, unless my memory deceives me, the scene between Cecilia and Heron in the garden has lost something that pleased me much when I saw it first; and I am not sure that you have not likewise obliterated an account of Sir Thomas's execution, that I found very pathetic. It would be strange if in these two particulars I should seem to miss what never existed; you will presently know whether I am as good at remembering what I never saw as I am at forgetting what I have seen. But, if I am right, I cannot help recommending the omitted passages to your re-consideration. If the play were designed for representation, I should be apt to think Cecilia's first speech rather too long, and should prefer to have it broken into dialogue, by an interposition

now and then from one of her sisters. But, since it is designed, as I understand, for the closet only, that objection seems of no importance; at no rate, however, would I expunge it, because it is both prettily imagined and elegantly written.

I have read your *cursory remarks*, and am much pleased both with the style and the argument. Whether the latter be new or not I am not competent to judge; if it be, you are entitled to much praise for the invention of it. Where other data are wanting to ascertain the time when an author of many pieces wrote each in particular, there can be no better criterion by which to determine the point than the more or less proficiency manifested in the composition. Of this proficiency, where it appears, and of those plays in which it appears not, you seem to have judged well and truly, and consequently I approve of your arrangement.

I attended, as you desired me, in reading the character of Cecilia, to the hint you gave me concerning your sister Sally, and give you joy of such a sister. This, however, not exclusively of the rest, for, though they may not all be Cecilias, I have a strong persuasion that they are all very amiable.

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

The Lodge, March 25, 1792.

My dearest Coz.—Mr. Rose's longer stay than he at first intended was the occasion of the longer

delay of my answer to your note, as you may both have perceived by the date thereof and learned from his information. It was a daily trouble to me to see it lying in the window-seat, while I knew you were in expectation of its arrival. By this time I presume you have seen him, and have seen likewise Mr. Hayley's friendly letter and complimentary sonnet, as well as the letter of the honest Quaker; all of which, at least the two former, I shall be glad to receive again at a fair opportunity. Mr. Hayley's letter slept six weeks in Johnson's custody.* It was necessary I should answer it without delay, and accordingly I answered it the very evening on which I received it, giving him to understand, among other things, how much vexation the bookseller's folly had cost me, who had detained it so long; especially on account of the distress that I knew it must have occasioned to him also. From his reply, which the return of the post brought me, I learn that in the long interval of my non-correspondence, he had suffered anxiety and mortification enough; so much that I dare say he made twenty vows never to hazard again either letter or compliment to an unknown author. What, indeed, could

* We have already stated that Hayley was engaged in a life of Milton, when Cowper was announced as editor of Johnson's projected work. With a generosity that reflects the highest credit on his feelings, he addressed a letter on this occasion to Cowper, accompanied by a complimentary sonnet, and offering his kind aid in any way that might prove most acceptable. The letter was entrusted to the bookseller, who delayed transmitting it six weeks, and thereby created great anxiety in Hayley's mind.

he imagine less than that I meant by such an obstinate silence to tell him that I valued neither him nor his praises, not his proffered friendship, in short, that I considered him as a rival, and therefore, like a true author, hated and despised him. He is now, however, convinced that I love him, as indeed I do, and I account him the chief acquisition that my own verse has ever procured me. Brute should I be if I did not, for he promises me every assistance in his power.

I have likewise a very pleasing letter from Mr. Park, which I wish you were here to read; and a very pleasing poem that came inclosed in it for my revisal, written when he was only twenty years of age, yet wonderfully well written, though wanting some correction.

To Mr. Hurdis I return Sir Thomas More to-morrow, having revised it a second time. He is now a very respectable figure, and will do my friend, who gives him to the public this spring, considerable credit.

W. C.

TO THOMAS PARK, ESQ.*

Weston Underwood, March 30, 1792.

My dear Sir—If you have indeed so favourable an opinion of my judgment as you profess, which I shall not allow myself to question, you will think

* Private Correspondence.

highly and honourably of your poem,* for so I think of it. The view you give of the place that you describe is clear and distinct, the sentiments are just, the reflections touching, and the numbers uncommonly harmonious. I give you joy of having been able to produce, at twenty years of age, what would not have disgraced you at a much later period; and, if you choose to print it, have no doubt that it will do you great credit.

You will perceive, however, when you receive your copy again, that I have used all the liberty you gave me. I have proposed many alterations; but you will consider them as only proposed. My lines are by no means obtruded on you, but are ready to give place to any that you shall choose to substitute of your own composing. They will serve at least to mark the passages which seem to me susceptible of improvement, and the manner in which I think the change may be made. I have not always, seldom indeed, given my reasons, but without a reason I have altered nothing, and the decision, as I say, is left with you in the last instance. Time failed me to be particular and explicit always in accounting for my strictures, and I assured myself that you would impute none of them to an arbitrary humour, but all to their true cause—a desire to discharge faithfully the trust committed to me.

I cannot but add, I think it a pity that you, who have evidently such talents for poetry, should be so loudly called another way, and want leisure to cul-

* A juvenile offering of gratitude to the place where the writer had received his education.

tivate them; for if such was the bud, what might we not have expected to see in the full-blown flower? Perhaps, however, I am not quite prudent in saying all this to you, whose proper function is not that of a poet, but I say it, trusting to *your* prudence, that you will not suffer it to seduce you.

I have not the edition of Milton's juvenile poems which you mention, but shall be truly glad to see it, and thank you for the offer.

No possible way occurs to me of returning your MS. but by the Wellingborough coach: by that conveyance therefore I shall send it on Monday, and my remarks, rough as I made them, shall accompany it.

Believe me with much sincerity,

Yours,

W. C.

TO SAMUEL ROSE, ESQ.

The Lodge, March 30, 1792.

My dear Friend—My mornings, ever since you went, have been given to my correspondents; this morning I have already written a long letter to Mr. Park, giving my opinion of his poem, which is a favourable one. I forget whether I showed it to you when you were here, and even whether I had then received it. He has genius and delicate taste; and, if he were not an engraver, might be one of our first hands in poetry.

W. C.

TO SAMUEL ROSE, ESQ.

Weston, April 5, 1792.

You talk, my dear friend, as John Bunyan says, "like one that has the egg-shell still upon his head." You talk of the mighty favours that you have received from me, and forget entirely those for which I am indebted to you; but, though you forget them, I shall not, nor ever think that I have requited you, so long as any opportunity presents itself of rendering you the smallest service: small indeed is all that I can ever hope to render.

You now perceive, and sensibly, that not without reason I complained, as I used to do, of those tiresome rogues the printers. Bless yourself that you have not two thick quartos to bring forth, as I had. My vexation was always much increased by this reflection—they are every day, and all day long, employed in printing for somebody, and why not for me? This was adding mortification to disappointment, so that I often lost all patience.

The suffrage of Dr. Robertson makes more than amends for the scurvy jest passed upon me by the wag unknown. I regard him not; nor, except for about two moments after I first heard of his doings, have I ever regarded him. I have somewhere a secret enemy; I know not for what cause he should be so, but he, I imagine, supposes that he has a cause: it is well, however, to have but one; and I will take all the care I can not to increase the number.

I have begun my notes, and am playing the commentator manfully. The worst of it is that I am anticipated in almost all my opportunities to shine by those who have gone before me.

W. C.

The following letter is the commencement of Cowper's correspondence with Hayley, originating in the circumstances already detailed to the reader.

TO WILLIAM HAYLEY, ESQ.

Weston, April 6, 1792.

My dear Friend—God grant that this friendship of ours may be a comfort to us all the rest of our days, in a world where true friendships are rarities, and especially where suddenly formed they are apt soon to terminate! But, as I said before, I feel a disposition of heart toward you, that I never felt for one whom I had never seen; and that shall prove itself, I trust, in the event, a propitious omen.

* * * * *

Horace says somewhere, though I may quote it amiss, perhaps, for I have a terrible memory,

> "Utrumque nostrum incredibili modo
> Consentit astrum." ——

* * * Our *stars consent*, at least have had an influence somewhat similar, in another and more important article.—— * * *

It gives me the sincerest pleasure that I may hope to see you at Weston; for, as to any migrations of mine, they must, I fear, notwithstanding the joy I

should feel in being a guest of yours, be still considered in the light of impossibilities. Come, then, my friend, and be as welcome (as the country people say here) as the flowers in May! I am happy, as I say, in the expectation; but the fear, or rather the consciousness, that I shall not answer on a nearer view, makes it a trembling kind of happiness and a doubtful.

After the privacy, which I have mentioned above, I went to Huntingdon; soon after my arrival there, I took up my quarters at the house of the Rev. Mr. Unwin; I lived with him while he lived, and ever since his death have lived with his widow. Her, therefore, you will find mistress of the house; and I judge of you amiss, or you will find her just such as you would wish. To me she has been often a nurse, and invariably the kindest friend, through a thousand adversities that I have had to grapple with in the course of almost thirty years. I thought it better to introduce her to you thus, than to present her to you at your coming, quite a stranger.

Bring with you any books that you think may be useful to my commentatorship, for, with you for an interpreter, I shall be afraid of none of them. And, in truth, if you think that you shall want them, you must bring books for your own use also, for they are an article with which I am *heinously unprovided:* being much in the condition of the man whose library Pope describes as

> "No mighty store!
> His own works neatly bound, and little more!"

You shall know how this has come to pass hereafter.

Tell me, my friend, are your letters in your own hand-writing? If so, I am in pain for your eyes, lest by such frequent demands upon them I should hurt them. I had rather write you three letters for one, much as I prize your letters, than *that* should happen. And now, for the present, adieu—I am going to accompany Milton into the lake of fire and brimstone, having just begun my annotations.

W. C.

TO THE REV. MR. HURDIS.

Weston, April 8, 1792.

My dear Sir—Your entertaining and pleasant letter, resembling in that respect all that I receive from you, deserved a more expeditious answer, and should have had what it so well deserved, had it not reached me at a time when, deeply in debt to all my correspondents, I had letters to write without number. Like autumnal leaves that strew the brooks in *Vallombrosa*, the unanswered farrago lay before me. If I quote at all, you must expect me henceforth to quote none but Milton, since for a long time to come I shall be occupied with him only.

I was much pleased with the extract you gave me from your sister Eliza's letter; she writes very elegantly, and (if I might say it without seeming to flatter you) I should say much in the manner of her brother. It is well for your sister Sally that gloomy Dis is already a married man, else perhaps

finding her, as he found Proserpine, studying botany in the fields, he might transport her to his own flowerless abode, where all her hopes of improvement in that science would be at an end for ever.

What letter of the 10th of December is that which you say you have not yet answered? Consider, it is April now, and I never remember any thing that I write half so long. But perhaps it relates to Calchas, for I do remember that you have not yet furnished me with the secret history of him and his family, which I demanded from you.

Adieu! Yours most sincerely,

W. C.

I rejoice that you are so well with the learned Bishop of Sarum,† and well remember how he ferreted the vermin Lauder‡ out of all his hidings, when I was a boy at Westminster.

I have not yet studied with your last remarks before me, but hope soon to find an opportunity.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.*

Weston, April 15, 1792.

My dear Friend—I thank you for your remit-

† Dr. Douglas.

‡ Lauder endeavoured to depreciate the fame of Milton by a charge of plagiarism. Dr. Douglas successfully vindicated the great poet from such an imputation, and proved that it was a gross fiction on the part of Lauder.

* Private Correspondence.

tance; which, to use the language of a song much in use when we were boys,

> "Adds fresh beauties to the spring,
> And makes all nature look more gay."

What the author of the song had particularly in view when he thus sang, I know not; but probably it was not the sum of fifty pounds: which, as probably, he never had the happiness to possess. It was, most probably, some beautiful nymph,—beautiful in his eyes, at least,—who has long since become an old woman.

I have heard about my wether mutton from various quarters. First, from a sensible little man, curate of a neighbouring village;* then from Walter Bagot; then from Henry Cowper; and now from you. It was a blunder hardly pardonable in a man who has lived amid fields and meadows, grazed by sheep almost these thirty years. I have accordingly satirized myself in two stanzas which I composed last night, while I lay awake, tormented with pain, and well dosed with laudanum. If you find them not very brilliant, therefore, you will know how to account for it.

> Cowper had sinn'd with some excuse,
> If, bound in rhyming tethers,
> He had committed this abuse
> Of changing ewes for wethers;
> But, male for female is a trope,
> Or rather bold misnomer,
> That would have startled even Pope,
> When he translated Homer.

* Rev. John Buchanan.

Having translated all the Latin and Italian Miltonics, I was proceeding merrily with a Commentary on the Paradise Lost, when I was seized, a week since, with a most tormenting disorder; which has qualified me, however, to make some very feeling observations on that passage, when I shall come to it:

....."Ill fare our ancestor impure!"

For this we may thank Adam;—and you may thank him, too, that I am not able to fill my sheet, nor endure a writing posture any longer. I conclude abruptly, therefore, but sincerely subscribing myself, with my best compliments to Mrs. Hill,

Your affectionate

W. C.

TO LADY THROCKMORTON.

Weston, April 16, 1792.

My dear Lady Frog—I thank you for your letter, as sweet as it was short, and as sweet as good news could make it. You encourage a hope that has made me happy ever since I have entertained it. And if my wishes can hasten the event, it will not be long suspended.* As to your jealousy, I mind it not, or only to be pleased with it; I shall say no more on the subject at present than this, that of all ladies living, a certain lady, whom I need not name,

* The prospect of a marriage between Miss Stapylton, the Catharina of Cowper, and Mr. Courtenay, Sir John Throckmorton's brother.

would be the the lady of my choice for a certain gentleman, were the whole sex submitted to my election.

What a delightful anecdote is that which you tell me of a young lady detected in the very act of stealing our Catharina's praises; is it possible that she can survive the shame, the mortification, of such a discovery? Can she ever see the same company again, or any company that she can suppose, by the remotest possibility, may have heard the tidings? If she can, she must have an assurance equal to her vanity. A lady in London stole my song on the broken Rose, or rather would have stolen and have passed it for her own. But she too was unfortunate in her attempt; for there happened to be a female cousin of mine in company, who knew that I had written it. It is very flattering to a poet's pride that the ladies should thus hazard every thing for the sake of appropriating his verses. I may say with Milton, that I am fallen *on evil tongues, and evil days*, being not only plundered of that which belongs to me, but being charged with that which does not. Thus it seems (and I have learned it from more quarters than one) that a report is, and has been some time current in this and the neighbouring counties, that, though I have given myself the air of declaiming against the Slave Trade in "The Task," I am in reality a friend to it; and last night I received a letter from Joe Rye, to inform me that I have been much traduced and calumniated on this account. Not knowing how I could better or more effectually refute the scandal, I have

this morning sent a copy to the Northampton paper, prefaced by a short letter to the printer, specifying the occasion. The verses are in honour of Mr. Wilberforce, and sufficiently expressive of my present sentiments on the subject. You are a wicked fair one for disappointing us of our expected visit, and therefore, out of mere spite, I will not insert them. I have been very ill these ten days, and for the same spite's sake will not tell you what has ailed me. But, lest you should die of a fright, I will have the mercy to tell you that I am recovering.

Mrs. G—— and her little ones are gone, but your brother is still here. He told me that he had some expectations of Sir John at Weston; if he come, I shall most heartily rejoice once more to see him at a table so many years his own.

W. C.

We subjoin the verses addressed to Mr. Wilberforce, intended to vindicate Cowper from the charge of lukewarmness in such a cause.

SONNET.

TO WILLIAM WILBERFORCE, ESQ.

Thy country, Wilberforce, with just disdain,
Hears thee, by cruel men and impious, call'd
Fanatic, for thy zeal to loose th' enthrall'd
From exile, public sale, and slav'ry's chain.
Friend of the poor, the wrong'd, the fetter-gall'd,
Fear not lest labour such as thine be vain!
Thou hast achiev'd a part, hast gain'd the ear
Of Britain's senate to thy glorious cause:

Hope smiles, joy springs, and tho' cold caution pause
And weave delay, the better hour is near,
That shall remunerate thy toils severe
By peace for Afric, fenc'd with British laws.
Enjoy what thou hast won, esteem and love
From all the just on earth and all the blest above!

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